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DISCOURSES

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On feveral IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

Viz.

The Difference between the Activity of Youth and the Infirmities of Age.

Barzillai's Refusal of David's Invitation to Jerusalem.

The Fruitfulness of Aged Christians.

Caleb's Reflection on the Goodness and Faithfulness of Goo

The Defign and Improvement of useless Days and wearifome Nights.

Gon's Promise to bear and deliver his aged Servants.

Ifrael's Journey thro' the Wilderness, an Emblem of the Christian's State on Earth, The outward Man decaying, and the inward Man renewing.

Jacob's Acknowledgment of the divine Care, and bleffing his Grand-children.

Joseph's dying Affurance to his Brethren, that God would visit them.

The Honour of aged Piety.

The Joy of the Aged to leave their Descendants prosperous, peaceful and pious.

The Hand of God in removing our Friends far from us.

The Affurance of Reft and future Glory given to aged.

Daniel.

By JOBORTON.

Though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient: — yet, for love's jake, I rather befeech thee; being fuch a one as PAUL the Azed; and now also a presoner of Jesus Christ. Philemon v. 8, 9.

SHREWSBURY:

Printed by J. Eddowes; and fold by J. Buckland and T. Lengman, in Pater-noster-row, London. 1771.

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PREFACE.

Learned Physician, Dr. Smith, [in his Portrait of old Age, p. 257] expresent his earnest desire, that Physicians would study the gerocomical part of phyfick, or what relates to the health and ease of old persons more than they do. 'Indeed, faith he, no part wants our help fo much as this. For, among all the verbose Gracians, there is not one complete tract upon this fubject. There are few to be found among all other writers; and those miserable and barren. The improvement that may be made in this part of physick would be as useful to mankind, as any one discovery of nature hitherto made.' - The like may, in fome degree, be faid of attempts to promote the religious improvement and comfort

comfort of aged persons. There are some celebrated pieces of the Heathen Philosophers, on the fubject of old Age. Some Germans have written upon it; but very few of our own Divines. Steele's Treatise on old Age is very useful, and was much esteemed and read in the last century, but is now become scarce and almost forgotten. The tracts of Davies and Peers. tho' ferious and useful, chiefly center in one point, and that not fufficiently peculiar, viz. preparation for Death and Eternity. It feems natural that perfons should read, with special attention and regard, what is particularly addressed to them, and fuited to their age and circum-It is, no doubt, on this principle, that many volumes of fermons to young persons have been published within the last forty years: and of late, particular addresses have been made from the press, to the poor and the great, and to young persons of each fex, which have been well received, and, I am perfuaded, have done

done much good. But I have not feen nor heard of any fermons immediately. addressed to the Aged: yet furely, they highly deferve efteem, compassion and affistance: and they may expect, among other acts of respect and kindness, to have fuch advices, encouragements and confolations, addressed to them, as may, by the bleffing of Gop, contribute to make their old age honourable; comfortable and useful, and smooth the last scenes: of their lives. This is attempted in the following discourses. I am far from pretending to equal the composures of my honoured fathers and brethren, who have addressed to the Young. But much accuracy, fprightliness and elegance, do not feem necessary in addressing the Aged. What is abstruse, critical and difficult, is here avoided, as it appeared improper and abfurd to trouble perfons, who are in the decline of life, with fuch things: and I have long observed, that they are A 2

best pleased with what is plain, simple and affectionate.

These sermons were delivered in the course of my stated ministry, and most of them on the last Lord's Days of successive years; it being my custom, on those days, to address more immediately to my aged friends, to whom they were very acceptable, and I hope beneficial. I was more disposed to employ some time in preparing them for the press, as Providence hath rendered me incapable of being useful in other ways; and as I am myself declining into the vale of years, and, by long-continued daily infirmities, got very far into it. From much experience, therefore, I know how to pity the Aged under their infirmities and decays, and defire to be their humble monitor and comforter.

I hope the subjects of these discourses will be thought suitable to the circumstances of the generality of the Aged; and that other infirm and afflicted persons

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fons, the not old, may find fome things in this volume, which may affift them to bear and improve their afflictions, as becometh christians. The affinity there is between some of the subjects, occafioned the same thoughts to be repeated, which could not be avoided without injustice to the subjects and the readers. On the other hand, fome important thoughts are omitted, or only hinted at in places, where it might be expected they should have been introduced, or largely discussed; because they are inserted and enlarged upon in some other difconguent clary informatic courfe.

I take this opportunity of publickly expressing my gratitude to God, for the favourable reception, which my volume of Discourses on secret and family Prayer, and the religious Observation of the Lord's Day, hath met with: and would also acknowledge my obligations to my friends and many others, who have recommended and encouraged the spread of them; and tons A 3

particularly to those, who have generoufly diffributed them among poor families. I shall esteem it a singular honour, and the ground of fervent thankfulness to Gop, if he is pleased to make these discourses subservient to the holiness and consolation of my aged brethren, and other companions in the tribulation and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ. To them they are very respectfully dedicated: and I intreat their earnest prayers, that I may daily manifest the graces which I recommend to their cultivation; that I may finish my course with joy, and meet them in that world of everlasting health and vigour, glory and felicity, for which all our afflictions and decays, all our religious privileges and the means of grace, are designed to prepare us. Amen.

Kidderminster, A. Miner que of J. O. July 15, 1771.

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The Difference between the Activity of Youth and the Infirmities of Age.

JOHN XXI. 18. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

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BARZILLAI'S Refusal of DAVID'S Invitation of him to JERUSALEM.

2 SAM. xix. 34. And Barzillai faid unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerufalem?

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The Fruitfulness of aged Christians.

PSALM

PSALM XCIE I They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing.

DISCOURSE IV.

CALEB's Reflection on the Goodness and Faithfulness of God to him.

Joshua xiv. 10. And now behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now lo, I am this day fourscore and sive years old.

DISCOURSE V.

The Defign and Improvement of useless
Days and wearisome Nights.

Job vii. 3. So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.

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God's Promife to bear, carry and deliver his aged Servants.

Isaiah xlvi. 4. And even to your old age
I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I
carry

carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.

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2 Cor. iv. 16. For which cause we faint not, but the our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

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Jacob's Acknowledgment of the divine Care, and bleffing his Grand-children.

Genesis xlviii. 15, 16. And he blessed Jofeph, and said, God, before whom my fathers fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,—the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

DISCOURSE X.

Joseph's dying Affurance to his Brethren, that God would visit them.

Genesis 1. 24. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

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I KINGS

1 Kings i. 48. And also thus said the king, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it. 276

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DISCOURSE I.

The Difference between the Activity of Youth and the Infirmities of Age.

Јони ххі. 18.

Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy Hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

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Our bleffed Lord, just before his ascension to Heaven, had eaten with his Apostles, and enquired particularly of Peter, three times, whether he loved him? Peter, having appealed to him for the sincerity of his love, Christ commands him to show that love by feeding his Sheep and Lambs, taking care of the interest of his church and people, even the weakest of them. He then

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foretells that this Apostle should die a violent death, and follow his Master to the cross: and he makes a comparison between the strength, agility and liberty he possessed and exercised, when he was Young, and what he should feel and fuffer when he was an old man. Tho' the words principally refer to the manner in which Peter should suffer, and (as the evangelist in the next verse interprets it) by what Death he should glorify Gop; yet, the comparison being founded on the difference there is between Youth and Age, they may naturally be applied to the circumstances of all in the advance of life. Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. - Let me consider,

- I. The View here given us of the Strength and Activity of Youth,
- II. Of the Weakness and Infirmities of Age, and direct you to the proper

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Improvement of each. As I am at this time particularly to address the Aged, I shall but touch upon the former; tho whatever contributes to the wisdom and piety of Youth, contributes to the comfort of Age.—Let me consider,

I. The View here given of the Strength and Activity of Youth.

' When thou wast young, saith Christ to Peter, thou girdedft thyfelf and walkedft whither thou wouldeft.' 'The glory of young men, faith Solomon, is their Strength.' * They are strong and fit for action; perform any business they undertake, with ease. They are seldom afraid of dangers, or discouraged by difficulties. They gird themselves, to prepare for labouring and travelling: they need little help, and will foon dispatch what is within the compass of their ability. They walk whither they will with eafe and agility, without any pain or stiffness in their limbs. Their joints are strong and pliable; their finews and mufcles firm, and their nerves braced. When B 2 they

^{*} Prov. xx. 27.

they are tired, they sleep sound and soon recover their strength. They are so capable of motion and action, and have such a natural inclination to it, that inactivity is generally a pennance to them, and there is scarce any thing they dislike more than confinement.—I cannot dismiss this Head, without making two Ressections from it.

1. How abfurd is it for Youth to be indolent and inactive!

Providence hath given them Strength and intends that they should use it. By a moderate exertion of it in business or motion, it increaseth. Yet there are too many inflances of young persons, who are unnaturally indolent. They love fleep and inactivity, and thereby weaken their strength and stupify their faculties. they go from home, they faunter along, as if their limbs would not carry them. When they are engaged in business, they doze over it, and feem to go on heavily in every thing. This is a very unhappy disposition. Inactivity is bad for their health: it is a hindrance to their progress

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gress in bufiness, and their profit by it. They feldom overcome this evil habit in future life, and thereby often come to poverty. Besides, this indolent temper layeth them open to many temptations; particularly to bad company, to neglect the means of grace and all those branches of Religion, which require labour and felf-denial. This unhappy disposition in Youth is often owing to the foolish indulgence of their parents, especially if their conflitutions are not vigorous. It appears therefore a matter of great importance, that parents should teach, and even oblige, their children to be diligent and active; to go about their bufiness and even their play, with refolution, courage and dispatch; in a word, to do as much for themselves, and have as little help from others, as possible. --- Let us reflect.

2. How reasonable and desirable is it for young persons to employ their Strength and Activity in God's service!

The you are young, yet you are rational creatures, and the fubjects and fer-

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vants of GoD; and therefore should devote your Strength to the fervice and honour of him, who gave it. It is pity it should all be employed in pursuing the world, or ferving divers lufts and pleafures; that you should give your Strength to fin, and your ways to that which destroyeth Souls. How fad is it, that you should pursue your pleasures with vigour and spirit, and yet have no life in Religion! That you should readily walk to every affembly, but the folemn affembly; and dance or fport till midnight or after it, and yet fay of God's fervice, 'what a weariness is it'? and when will the Sabbath be gone? That you should spend hour after hour at a card-table, and yet be tired in hearing or reading a fermon! Whereas, according to St. John's words, 'Because you are strong, the word of God ought to abide in you, and ye ought to overcome the wicked one.' * Let God then, my young friends, have the prime of your days, the vigour of your Strength and the warmth of your affections. He claims, and he deserves thefe

^{• 1} John. ii. 14.

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res efe these: and if you are not as active in his fervice, as you are in your business and pleasures, it is a fign that you want wisdom, and you are laying a foundation for forrow and remorfe. For the words of the text may be applied to an old finner. 'When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldedft: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.' You will be bound in the fetters of iniquity and carried into captivity. The powers of your fouls will be enfeebled; and you will have loft that degree of Strength, which you now have to break your bonds afunder. You may attempt it again and again, but in vain. Confider therefore now, that Age will quickly come, and weaken your Strength in the way, the Strength both of body and mind, if fickness doth not do it before. Therefore Solomon exhorts, * ' Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, before the evil days come, and B 4

^{*} Eccl. xii. 1.

the years draw nigh, when thou shalt fay, I have no pleasure in them.'-But this leads me to confider,

II. The View given us in the text of the Weakness and Infirmities of Age.

When men grow old, they stretch forth their hands for help; want others to guide and affift them; and they have, in general, an unwillingness to die. Instead of walking where they would, as they did when they were Young, they are confined to a narrow sphere; move slowly and with difficulty, thro' the weakness of their sight, the shortness of their breath, or the decay of their strength. Fear is in the way, and they are foon tired. The keepers of the house, the hands and arms, tremble; and the strong men, the legs and thighs, bow themselves. Their feet, that carried them many pleafant walks and vifits, now move with difficulty and pain. Their hands, that used to work, grow so weak, that they can scarce dress or feed themselves: and the back, that used to support the building, bends and stoops under the burden of years. They are not able to help

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help others or defend themselves. They are glad of a staff to rest upon, or some friendly hand to support their tottering steps. Even their strength is labour and forrow. The grasshopper is a burden, and appetite fails; and, thro' various Infirmities, the clouds return after the rain. And yet it is often found, that they are unwilling to die, tho' they have not, like Peter, the prospect of a violent death before them. To be carried to the grave is to be carried, whither they would not; and some of them thro' fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. - But this is fo plain, that it needs no further illustration. The great thing is, to attend to the proper Improvement to be made of it, which will be in the following

REFLECTIONS.

1. Let us adore the wisdom of God in this difference between the Young and the Aged.

In the present state of the world this difference may be called natural; tho' the Infirmities of Age may rather be confidered as unnatural, being the consequence

B 5

of man's apostacy from God. Nevertheless, the wisdom of Providence is apparent in this difference. One is fometimes ready to wish, that the Aged, who have most wifdom and experience, had most strength: but while we have old heads to contrive and advise, and young hands to work, it comes much to the fame. Besides, had the Aged the strength of Youth, they would be more ready to despise the Young, than they now are. The Young have op-portunities of improving by the experience of the Aged; of cultivating and showing compassion and benevolence to them, and requiting the tender care they manifested to them in their helpless infancy. The fight of the Aged and their various Infirmities, tends to engage young people to make a prudent preparation for Age, by diligence, frugality, a friendly obliging temper; and especially by a close application to ferious Religion. God hath, in this respect, distributed his gifts variously. As in the natural body, ' the eye cannot fay to the hand, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you; fo neither can the Aged fay to the Young, nor the Young

Young to the Aged, we have no need of you. - Their infirmities are likewise a standing token of the evil of Sin, and hint to themselves and all about them, what a bitter thing it is to revolt from GoD. -They are also wisely appointed to wean their affections from the world. If God did not take them off from it by pains and weakness, they would scarce know when to leave it. But he lays them by from business and amusements, that they may have more time for reading, meditation and prayer, and to fet their fouls in order for their speedy remove to Eternity. - From the Infirmities of the Aged, we,

2. Learn the wisdom of making a prudent provision for old age.

When our Lord commands us to take no thought for the morrow, he means only to restrain anxiety, and inordinate, excessive care; not a prudent forecast. It is the duty of young persons to apply themselves to some business and calling; to be diligent in it; to be frugal and saving; that they may make provision for a family;

mily; be raifed above the temptations of poverty; enjoy the pleasures of beneficence, and have a comfortable fubfiftence, if they should live to be old and infirm. An apocryphal writer faith, ' If thou hast gathered nothing in thy Youth, how canst thou find any thing in thine Age?* It is therefore very criminal in them, especially in fervants, to be wasteful and extravagant; to purchase unnecessary things, because they please their fancy and make them like their fuperiours; and to fpend all they get in dress and vanity. They feldom think what they shall do in sickness and old age. For want of that thought, they often prove heavy burdens to their friends, or to the publick, which might have been prevented by frugality. + A state of dependance is a miserable state

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· Ecclus. xxv. 3.

† I am credibly informed, that a person, who had lately a large sum of money lest to him to distribute in charity, had application made to him for a share of it from no less than thirty persons, who had rode in their own coaches. How pertinent is the caution given above, in the present Age!

to any; especially to those who have lived in plenty: and when men have brought themselves into straits by their extravagance, they must expect to be often re-minded of it, nor will they be assisted with chearfulness. It is therefore the wifdom of young persons to be diligent, cautious and frugal; content with plain drefs and accommodations, that they may lay up in store for futurity. In this refpect, as Solomon observes, 'the prudent man forefeeth the evil and hideth himfelf, that is, makes provision against it; but the fimple pass on, without thought and confideration, and so are punished. *---Are the Infirmities of Age fo many, then,

3. It is the duty of all to help and comfort the Aged; especially of their own descendants.

Nothing can be meaner or viler than to use them ill; to impose upon their blindness; deafness and decay of memory, or to despise them on account of their Infirmities. It is on the contrary, our duty,

to do what we can for their support, affiftance and comfort, and behave to them with reverence and respect. Their very Age entitles them to this; especially when their hoary heads are crowns of glory, being found in the way of righteoufness. Their former activity and usefulness should be remembered to their honour. This also is the command of Gop, 'Thou shalt rife up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man. I am the Lord.' * St. Peter likewise exhorts, 'Ye younger submit your felves to the elder.' But the children and grand-children of aged persons are under peculiar and indifpenfible obligations to help and comfort them. They are commanded ' to shew piety or kindness at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before Gop.' + This they are to do, by maintaining them, if necessary; by confulting their ease and honour; by hearkening to their advices; and more especially maintaining a conversation becoming the Gospel, that their hearts may rejoice, and that they may have the respect, gratitude, and

^{*} Lev. xix. 32. † 1 Tim. v. 4.

and piety of their descendants to balance their griefs and lighten their infirmities:
——From the consideration of these, we may infer,

4. It is the wisdom and interest of those, who are advancing in life, to secure what friends they can.

Aged persons want help and affistance; and fometimes for years together. Their children may be taken away by death, removed to a distance, or prove ungrateful and disobedient. Those, whose duty it is to affift them, may be incapable or unwilling to do it; and it is often feen that ' there is a friend who flicks closer than a brother.' I would therefore recommend it to the Aged to avoid every thing, that would difgust and drive away their friends: particularly a positive, supercilious, overbearing temper; a fretful, uneafy, difcontented spirit; always complaining of flights and neglects; and thus making the lives of all about them uncomfortable. Be not continually finding fault with your Youngers; for they are the persons who must help you; few of your cotemporaries

ries can. And it must be a very extraordinary degree either of piety, or good nature, that will incline persons, no way bound by relation, to help those, who are always cross and perverse. If you drive away those that could help you, and would do it with pleasure, if you were meek, obliging and thankful, you may stretch out your hands in vain, and thank yourselves for it, if the world appears desirous to be rid of you. 'A man that hath friends, or would have them, must show himself friendly.'

5. Let the Aged labour to be patient, chearful, and thankful under their Infirmities.

Consider, my friends, that every Age hath its burdens and infirmities, its services and its joys: that no strange thing happens to you; nothing but what is common to men in the decline of life. What are you better than your fathers? than blind Isaac, decrepid David, and aged Peter; all the favourites of Heaven?—Consider also, that there are many circumstances to lighten your burdens, and reconstrances to lighten your burdens, and reconstrances.

cile your minds to your pains and infirmities. For instance, it is an honour to be old. Accordingly Eli was thus threatened, that ' there should not be an old man in his house. How many thousands have you furvived, who fet out in life with you, and many of them feemed likely to have furvived you! Length of days are, I hope, a reward of your piety, and your gray head is your beauty and crown of glory. Remember the vigour, ftrength and pleasure of your Youth; and when wearisome days and nights are appointed to you, think how many eafy and happy ones you have enjoyed; how many years of health, comfort and usefulness you have been blessed with. And having received fo much good at the hand of the Lord, undeferved and forfeited good, will you be impatient and unthankful if you receive some evil? - You have perhaps the fatisfaction to fee your children and children's children, which, as Solomon observes, are 'the crown of old men,' and to be witnesses of their wisdom, piety and usefulness. - You have likewise this advan-

^{*} Prov. xvii. 6.

advantage, that the most dangerous appetites and passions of the human frame are weakened by Age, and the fewel of vice almost destroyed. 'It is (as a Hea-then expressed it) a singular privilege of old age, that it delivers men from that, which was most pernicious in Youth.' It is well that all your comforts have not left you together: and it will be your wifdom fairly to estimate your comforts and your crosses. Let not your Infirmities make you forget, or be unthankful for, any degrees of health and ease, that are continued to you; any help and kindness you receive from your relations and friends. Remember particularly, if you are fincere Christians, that 'your falvation is nearer than when you believed;' and, if you have been active and zealous in Christ's service, your reflections are comfortable and your hopes of glory lively. And this, furely, is fufficient to balance all your forrows. I conclude this head in the words of a heathen philosopher, 'A quiet honest old age is to be preferred to any other Age, and he that complains of it, is unworthy to possess it.' 6. Let

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6. Let the Aged endeavour to be as useful as they can, even to the last.

This is indeed the duty of every man, in every period of his life: but I would now particularly urge it upon the Aged, for these two reasons, They have some peculiar advantages for doing good - and yet are prone to make their Infirmities an excuse for sloth, and to say, their work is done, before their capacity and strength are quite gone. I exhort you to gird yourfelves and walk as you can; giving as little trouble to those about you, as posfible. This will be much for your own health and ease, and for the comfort of your relatives and friends. It is the duty of those who are advancing in life, to refift the encroachments of Age; and the nearer approach it makes, the more diligence they should use in repelling it: they should (as one expresseth it) guard against it as a distemper; consulting their health, using moderate exercise, and such diet both for kind and quantity, as may refresh nature without loading it. They should also diligently exercise the faculties

of the mind, and especially labour to keep the memory clear and found by habitual exercise. For by remissiness and sloth, the powers both of body and mind will decay. As your consciences will charge you with much mispense of time, endeavour to make the best improvement of what remaineth. Still attend regularly on the house and worship of Goo; for no one is too old to learn, or too good not to need to be quickened. It is an instance of the wisdom of Providence, that while old people often lose their fight and hearing, and are incapable of walking about, they have still the power of speech: a plain intimation, that God intends you should use it wisely and for his glory. If you have a good treasure in your hearts and are rich in christian experience, communicate it freely for the benefit of others. Days should speak, and the multitude of years teach wifdom. Let your lips feed many, and be frequently dropping a word of exhortation to those who are Young: not with the air and tone of a four dictator, but with the tenderness of a parent, and the freedom of a friend. While

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While you 'open your mouths with wisdom, let the law of kindness be upon your tongues.'* Exhort them to remember their Creator, to trust in the Saviour's mighty name, to keep near to God in fecret devotion and publick ordinances, and to cherish brotherly love. It is faid of St. John, that when thro' age and weakness, he was forced to be carried to the christian assembly, and had only strength to utter a few words, he would often fay, ' Little children, love one another.' Solomon exhorteth to fuch a conduct as this, when he faith, 'In the morning of life fow thy feed, and in the evening with-hold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that; or whether they both fhall be alike good.'+---Endeavour

Armstrong on Health, B. iv. 1. 224, &c. + Eccl. xi. 6.

Tho' old, he still retain'd His manly sense, and energy of mind. Virtuous and wise he was, but not severe; He still remember'd that he once was young; His easy presence check'd no decent joy. Him ev'n the dissolute admir'd; for he A graceful freedom when he pleas'd put on, And laughing could instruct.

Endeavour to be useful likewise by praying for the world and the church; especially for the rifing generation. Lay up a stock of prayers for posterity, when your walking and working days are over. Let your patience, contentment and chearfulness, show to all about you, that you have not learned the religion of Jesus, nor made fo long a profession of it, in vain. Thus will your ' last works be, on some accounts, better than your first,' and Christ when he cometh, will find you so doing. This was the use which St. Peter made of our Lord's prophecy in the text. ' I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to fir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jefus Chrift hath showed me.'* Think me not affuming, Fathers, in these exhortations; for thus faith Paul to Titus, ' Speak thou the things which become found doctrine; that the Aged be fober, grave, temperate, found in faith, in charity and in patience; that they behave as becometh

^{* 2} Pet. i. 13, 14.

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cometh holiness, and be teachers of good things.' *

7. Let the Aged endeavour to reconcile their hearts to the approach of death.

Peter, tho' old, tho' he had feen Christ's transfiguration, and could appeal to him for the fincerity of his love, yet was difmayed at the approach of a violent death. Hezekiah, tho' he could appeal to Goo, that he had walked before him in truth and with an upright heart, wept fore, when the prophet told him he should die and not live. The fear of death is a natural passion; and if it were not an evil, it would never have been made the object of a threatening. Even most of the Aged and infirm would live a little longer. But it is defirable for your own comfort and the honour of Religion, that you should be willing to die, on the best principles; not so much to get rid of your pains and infirmities, as to fee your Lord, and obtain the falvation of your fouls. In order o this, quit all earthly cares, as much is possible, and do not grasp the world,

as too many do, with a dying hand, as if it were their God and their All. Endeavour to wean your affections from all things here below; to have your conversation in Heaven, and to meditate more closely on the glory to be revealed. Think, how little was to be done for God, and how little of Him to be enjoyed, even in your best days. Endeavour by a life of faith, meekness, patience and heavenly-mindedness, to contract a greater fuitableness to, and meetness for, the heavenly life, on which, you hope thro' grace, you are just entering; that as 'the outward man decays, the inward man may be renewed day by day:' that when you ftand at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, you may fear no evil, but may fay, with a pious Minister in those circumstances, * Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; I am ready.'--- I shall only add,

8. Let Aged Christians rejoice in the views of the heavenly world:

For there shall be none of the infirmities of Age, nor any other Infirmity of Imperfection. When you groan in these earthst

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earthly tabernacles, being burdened, direct your thoughts to the time, and it is near, when you shall be clothed upon with an heavenly house, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life.' Look further, to the rifing day, when ' the creature shall be entirely delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of Gop.' Then, ' what is fown in weakness, shall be raised in power; needing no recruits of food nor sleep, and subject to no pain, disease nor wearinefs. The eyes, which have feen the Lord Jefus in his glory, shall weep and be dim no more. The head, which he hath graciously adorned with a crown of righteousness, shall ache no more. The hands, which have laid hold on eternal life, shall tremble no more: but the holy foul will possess everlasting youth, ftrength and vigour; and all will be employed in the praifes and fervices of Gop and the Lamb. - I conclude with expressing my earnest wishes and prayer for you, my aged brethren, that your burdens may be light and eafy; your tempers patient, calm and chearful; your lives

26 The Difference between, &c. S. 1.

lives honourable and useful to the last; that at length your end may be peace, and you may have an abundant entrance into that world, where 'there shall be no more death, neither forrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are all passed away.'



DISCOURSE II.

Barzillai's Refusal of David's Invitation to Jerusalem considered.

2 SAMUEL XIX. 34.

And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

THESE words are part of Barzillai's modest and serious reply to a very kind and generous offer, which king David made him. This venerable old gentleman had, with remarkable loyalty and benevolence, furnished David and his attendants with provision and other accommodations, when he sled from his capital city, on occasion of the rebellion of his son Absalom. † When the rebellion was quelled and David was returning home, Barzillai came to congratulate

+ Ch. xvii. 27-29.

gratulate him on the occasion, and attend him part of the way. The king invited him to come and spend the remainder of his days at Jerusalem, to eat at his table, and promifed to repay to him and his family, the kindness which he had received from him in the day of his distress. A charming proposal, had Barzillai loved the world and been fond of its honours! But this venerable and worthy man declines it. He makes a very handsome reply, of which our text is the beginning; 'How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old. It is past the time of life for me to be intent upon such things. I must not think of changing my habitation, when I must so soon change worlds. I chuse rather to live retired from the cares and pleasures of this world, that I may better reflect upon, and prepare for, the folemn time, when I must remove from it; which time is near at hand. - The text naturally fuggefts these two remarks, which I shall endeavour to illustrate and improve, with a para particular view to the instruction of the Aged.

- I. A ferious confideration of approaching Death is peculiarly proper for aged persons.
- II. The prospect of a speedy removal out of this world, should wean their affections from it.
- I. A ferious confideration of approaching Death is peculiarly proper for aged persons.

Barzillai in his reply to David, feems to have the near approach of death chiefly in his view. So he adds, v. 37, ' Let thy fervant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother.' And furely, fuch a view was exceedingly proper and becoming for a person of his age, tho' he seemed posfessed of much strength and vigour. To illustrate this remark, let me observe in general, that it is fit, and will be very beneficial, for us all to confider our latter end. It is to be wished that all

I. The

men were so wise, as to dwell upon the contemplation of death, and make the folemn fcenes and awful confequences of it, familiar to their minds: and that, for this evident reason, that it is absolutely certain and unavoidable. Barzillai knew, and all men know, that a royal palace, however ftrong and well guarded, cannot keep out the king of terrors; that no titles, honours, pleasures, or emoluments, no wifdom or piety, can fcreen from its fatal stroke. Innumerable are the diseases and accidents to which our bodies are liable; and any one of them may cut afunder the thread of life, when it feems likely to be fpun out for many years. How common foever these thoughts may be, and the facts which lead to them, nothing can be of greater importance than feriously to consider them: since after death, there is the judgment, when every man must receive his doom, according to the things done in the body. - But fome circumstances make it peculiarly proper, that the Aged should make these thoughts familiar and habitual to them, For instance,

1. The speedy period of their lives is more certain than that of others.

There is a probability that they who are in the prime or morning of their days, may continue many years: but there is no probability that the Aged should. They who are arrived to feventy years, which is called the age of man, know that they must shortly put off the body; and they who, like Barzillai, are got ten years beyond it, are fure of a very speedy difmission. Their lease is just expired: it is time, high time, for them daily to expect an ejectment, and to confider what an abode and state they shall be removed to, when turned out of these houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. -This leads me to add,

- 2. The Infirmities which are peculiar to, or most frequent in, old age, make the consideration of death highly proper.
- 'The days of our years, faith Moses, are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years; yet is their strength labour and C 4 forrow,

forrow, for it is foon cut off and we flee away.' + A vigorous hearty old man is a very uncommon fight. The old are subject to many and various pains and infirmities: and each of these is a warning, and tells them, they are not to ftay long here. The chinks which time hath made in their earthly tabernacle remind them that its downfall is near; that the next storm, the next disease may overthrow it; or, if it escapes a violent attack, it will soon fall of itself. Then, as Solomon beautifully expresfeth it, ' the clouds return after the rain,' ‡ one infirmity fucceeds another, and their intervals of ease and comfort are short. Then ' the keepers of the house tremble, and the ftrong men bow themselves:' the arms that defended the body, tremble; the thighs and legs that supported it, totter and bend under the weight. 'Those that look out at the windows are darkened.' The eyes fail, and give the man notice that they must soon be sealed up in darkness. Now these sensible decays of nature daily warn them to be ferious and

⁺ Pfalm xc. 10.

[‡] Eccl. xii. 3, &c.

and thoughtful about their journey to their long home.

3. The remembrance of the many relations, friends and acquaintance whom they have furvived, should excite this disposition in them.

When aged persons visit the places where they have fpent their youth, and think of those, who set out in life with them, they will find very few of them left. How common is it to hear them faying, that they have buried all their old friends and acquaintance, and furvived not only their brothers, fifters and yoke-fellows, but even some of their children, and perhaps grand-children too? They will tell you of whole families that are funk and gone in their remembrance; and that the street or town where they live, hath changed almost every inhabitant. Those few of their own standing, which remain, are dropping-off apace. Surely fuch common reflections as these should lead them to think of their own removal. Your fathers, your acquaintance and neighbours, where are they? C 5 They

They are gone into Eternity, and their places here know them no more. It is proper and natural for you daily to think of following them, and making room for another generation. When you mention, or think of, the changes made in your family and neighbourhood, think of your own hastening change, and put Barzillai's question to your own consciences, ' How long have I to live?' -- How fuitable is that petition of Moses for us all, and for the Aged especially, after he had been contemplating the shortness of life and the weakness of old age, ' so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.' + --- This naturally leads our thoughts to the fecond remark from the text:

- II. The prospect of a speedy removal out of this world, should wean our affections from it.
- 'How long have I to live, faith the pious gentleman in the text, that I should go up with the king unto ferusalem?'
 That I should enter on a new scene, immerse

merfe myfelf in the cares, and indulge myself in the pleasures of life? I must fo quickly depart, that it will be my wifdom to keep myfelf from being entangled with these things and enfnared by them. May this be the wisdom of all the Aged! -- ' All that is in the world, faith the Apostle, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life: the pleasures, honours and riches of this world. The profpect of death led Barzillai to decline each of these, when offered to him; as appears by the following verses. --- To illustrate this remark, I would observe, that the prospect of death should make aged persons dead to the honours and pleasures of this world, - and it should be their defire and endeavour, as far as they lawfully can, to get free from its cares.

- 1. The prospect of death should make the Aged dead to the honours and pleafures of this world.
- 'I am this day, faith Barzillai, eighty years old. Can thy fervant taste, what I eat or what I drink?' What will all the C 6 dainties

dainties of the court be to me, now my appetite and relish for them is gone? Can I hear any more the voice of finging men and finging women?' Musick hath lost its charms to me, and the most fprightly airs and melodious harmony will only grate in my ears, now the daughters of musick are brought low; my ear is dull, and my voice broken and trembling. What he here fuggests, namely, that his relish for pleasure was gone, is generally the case of the Aged, and therefore an evidence that they should not be fond of it. It is plainly the will of God, that at this time of life fuch amusements and diversions should be chearfully refigned: yea, fetting afide all religious confiderations, common prudence warns them, as one expresseth it, ' to tie up the wheel, as they are going down the hill of life.' It is good to make a virtue of necessity, and be dead to the delights of fense, when they are in a great measure dead to you. To indulge your appetites and desires in such a manner as would be natural and innocent in younger perfons, is generally putting a force upon nature

nature, counter-acting the defigns of providence, and exposing yourselves to general contempt. To fee aged perfons fcrambling for the honours and preferments of this world, which they can enjoy but a little while, and the weight of which they are unable to bear with credit and comfort, must appear, to all but themselves, very absurd and shocking. Their relaxations and amusements should be all grave and manly. The honours and pleasures of this world should be left to the rifing age. They may lawfully purfue and enjoy those that are innocent, provided it be with moderation and a mind intent upon better things. Barzillai thought it improper for him to go to David's court: but, faith he to the king, ' Let thy fervant Chimham, my fon, go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall feem good unto thee, v. 37.' From whence Mr. Henry well obferves, 'They who are old should not grudge young people those delights, which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor confine them to their retirements. Every thing is beautiful in its feafon.' —The

-The Aged should be dead to the honours and pleasures of this world, because, if they are true Christians, they enjoy nobler pleasures, and have better honours in possession, and especially in profpect. You have pleasures infinitely nobler; arising from the contemplation of divine things; living by faith in Chrift, and feeling the constraining influence of his love; from the testimony of your confciences, the witness and consolation of the Spirit; from conversing with God by meditation and prayer, and from good hope thro' grace. Earthly honours and pleafures are prone to enervate minds in their full vigour; much more those, which are already weakened by age. You have the honour of being the children of God, the brethren of Christ, and joint heirs with him of the heavenly inheritance. Your minds therefore should be fixed upon divine and heavenly objects, and daily aiming to contract a greater relish and meetness for the pleasures of Angels and glorified faints. - Indeed the Aged do not often fall into the error, which I am cautioning you against: but as it is is plainly fuggested by Barzillai to be absurd and monstrous, and evidently appears to be so, when it is observed, it was proper to be mentioned. I proceed to what concerns them more; namely,

2. The prospect of death should lead them to get free from the cares of the world, as far as they lawfully can.

Barzillai would not go to Ferusalem, because it would engage him in many unnecessary cares, in leaving the place where he was fettled, and entering on a new fphere of action: and it is much to be wished, that the Aged would follow his example. I would be far from encouraging even them in idleness. It is their duty to labour while they have ability, if their labours are necessary to provide for themselves or their families; and not to make themselves unnecessarily burdenfome to their relations and friends. What I would caution them against, is, being immerfed in the cares of the world, when it is unnecessary. When, tho' they may not, like Barzillai, be very great men, + they have a competency to maintain them comfortably

fortably while they live; when they have children to take the burden off their hands, who would be glad to enter into their labours. If, upon ferious enquiry as in the fight of God, they judge it to be most for his honour and their own health and comfort, that they should purfue their trade or business, it is their duty to bring it into as little compass as may be; to discharge themselves of those parts of it, which will be attended with anxious and perplexing cares. Thus ' when Samuel was old, he made his fons judges over Israel.' + The reasonableness of fuch a conduct in the Aged appears from the thought suggested in the text; that they have but a short time to live. Let the following particulars, as founded on this thought, be carefully confidered by them. — Their capacity for business is generally weakened, — they have more important concerns to mind, the more cares and business they have to attend to, the more their dying work will be diffurbed, - and the less fit will they be for Heaven. Give me a patient hearing,

^{+ 1} Sam. viii. 1.

hearing, Fathers, while I illustrate these important particulars.

Their capacity for business is generally weakened.

This is Barzillai's reasoning in the verse after the text: 'Can I discern between good and evil?' fee what is proper to be done in various circumstances and difficulties, which may occur? Wherefore should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?' I am not fit for the active offices of a court: I can do the king little fervice; therefore I will not burden him and stand in the way of others. I shall need to be waited upon myself. It is time for me to live retired, now my ftrength and faculties are impaired. This is usually the case of the Aged. Their limbs, once ftrong and active, tremble and flag. Their memory is decayed, fo that they cannot contrive and execute schemes as formerly. They often manage their business aukwardly and unfuccessfully; are easily imposed upon, and their affociates would conduct it better without them. They have feldom firmness

ness enough to bear the disappointments and vexations, which attend business. Little losses sink and perplex them; especially as they have no prospect of living to see them retrieved. These are plain intimations of Providence that they should lessen their earthly cares. And indeed the Aged ought, like Barzillai, to be the first to perceive themselves on the decline, and to retire, before the world is tired of them. — Again,

If their capacities continue ever fo good, they have more important concerns to mind: and but a little time for them.

The one thing needful, the great business relating to their souls and eternity, is sufficient to employ all the time, which they can spare from that needful rest, which old age requires. Your employment should be, to examine your state, improve your graces, gird up your loins, trim your lamps, and brighten your evidences, for your Lord is at hand. Religion should have the chief place in your affections, desires and pursuits; and every interval of health and ease should be improved in getting

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in ng getting more ready for Heaven. 'See then, as St. Paul exhorts, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'—Again,

The more cares you have upon your hands, the more will your dying thoughts be disturbed, and your last work be interrupted.

So important are dying moments, and fo awful the consequences of a departure out of this world, that it is extremely defirable to have nothing then to do but to die. To have perplexed affairs to fettle, long accounts to adjust, a will to make; how grievous must this be to a ferious person on the brink of eternity! Yet if these are not done, many and deplorable diffentions may be entailed upon a family. On these accounts 'whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might.' Methinks every funeral you see or hear of, every pain and infirmity you feel, faith to you, as Isaiah to Hezekiah, 'Set thy house in order, for thou

thou shalt die and not live.' † Labour then by forethought and immediate dispatch, to do so; that in these solemn moments, there may be nothing of this kind to perplex and discompose the thoughts: nothing to engage them but what is of a religious and heavenly nature; that all may be calm within, and your souls at full leisure to renew the exercises of repentance, faith, love and praise, and to receive communications of peace, hope and joy, from the Holy Spirit.

— Once more, consider,

By various worldly cares the foul will be less disposed and qualified for the heavenly world.

The immoderate love of the world is utterly inconsistent with the love of the Father: and such a love of it as may be regular and allowable in the prime or middle of life, may be immoderate and unjustifiable in old age. For it is both unnecessary, and takes up that time and thought, which should be better employed. It should be your concern, Fathers,

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to contract stronger habits of spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness, by conversing more with the unfeen world. I do not fay you should live like recluses, and thut yourselves up from all commerce with the world; but lessen your business and cares, as much as you prudently can, that your fouls may be better disposed for spiritual employments and entertainments, and that Heaven may be more welcome to you. The more worldly concerns you have to manage and fettle, the more will your hearts be fet on these things. You will be more unwilling to leave the world, and will enter into Heaven with less transport and thankfulness, than if you had acted the wife part, which Barzillai did. - Having thus illustrated the particulars fuggested in the text, I shall conclude the discourse with a serious address - to those in younger life, - and to the Aged.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me address to those who are in the morning or middle of life.

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The confiderations and cautions, which I have been urging, are applicable to you, tho' not equally with your fathers. - You are to purfue the business of life, - you may enjoy its pleasures, - but each under proper restrictions and limitations, because you may have but a little time to live. —— 'You ought to pursue the business of life:' diligently to employ yourselves in some honest calling. This is a duty you owe to God, to yourselves, to your families and the publick. Follow your business as closely as you will, if it doth not thrust out religion; entrench upon the duties of your closet; drive out, or break in upon, family-worship and order, or detain you from the house of GoD: if it doth not ruffle your temper, injure your health, or destroy domestick peace and happiness. In any of these cases, it is sinful. It is highly commendable in you to make provision for futurity, to encrease your substance, and leave your family even more than a-competency, if you acknowledge God in all your ways, and mind religion as the great concern of human life.

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Reason and scripture allow you, 'to-taste the pleasures and recreations of life; if they do not interfere with your religion or your business; if your recreations are innocent, manly, feafonable, and relieve the mind amidst its cares. Let your amusements subserve your health and comfort, and make you more fit for your duty both to God and man. - To engage you to purfue your business and enjoy recreations under fuch regulations as these, consider ' how little time you have to live.' You are young; at least vigorous and healthy: but are you not also frail and mortal? When you are plunging yourselves into many cares, and anxiously and immoderately pursuing your earthly schemes, ask yourselves the question in the text, ' How long have I to live,' that I should do so? that I should be fo fond of the world? fo eager to gain it, so fearful of losing it, so tenacious and covetous of it, and act as if it was my only hope and portion? Thus be careful not to abuse the world, for its fashion passeth away. Ask this question also with regard to your recreations; · How

' How long have I to live,' that I should fpend hour after hour at a card-table, or any other childish, sedentary, unprofitable diversion; that I should consume my precious, precarious moments in vain and trifling company? 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and the fight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will certainly, and may speedily, bring thee into judgment.' + Thus make the views of death familiar to your minds: for next to the influences of Gop's Spirit upon your hearts, nothing will be fo likely to make your business lawful, prosperous and comfortable; your amusements innocent, de-cent and useful, and your tempers habitually ferious and holy. Such a disposition will be of unspeakable benefit, if you are early removed out of life. If you live to be old, the habits of piety will be confirmed, and the world, with its cares and pleasures, more easily and chearfully refigned. - Finally, attend to the exhortation

tation of Christ, ' Take heed to yourfelves, lest at any time your hearts are overcharged with furfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares.' +

2. Let me add a brief exhortation to the Aged, founded on the subject we have been confidering.

I speak unto you, Fathers, because you cannot but know that the world is vain and death is near. Let me entreat you feriously to reflect, how absurd and shocking it is to fee a person on the borders of the grave, greedy of money, sparing no time or pains to encrease his substance. ' Can any thing, saith a Heather, be more abfurd, than for a man to be eager in laying up travelling expences, when his journey is just ended?' How fad is it to see a poor dying creature entering upon an awful eternity, with a heart glued to the world and full of its concerns; who, instead of being crucified to the world, is to the last doting upon it! Shall I be allowed, in this connection,

tion to address you in the beautiful, striking language of Dr. Young:

O my Co-evals! remnants of yourselves;
Poor human ruins, tott'ring o'er the grave!
Shall we, shall aged men, like aged trees,
Strike deeper their vile root, and closer cling,
Still more enamour'd of this wretched soil?
Shall our pale wither'd hands be still stretch'd out,
Trembling at once with eagerness and age?
With avarice and convulsion grasping hard,
Grasping at air? For what has earth besides?
Man wants but little; nor that little long;
How soon must be resign his very dust,
Which frugal nature lent him for an hour?

How wise, pertinent and affecting a caution! 'Labour not then to be rich: cease from your own wisdom:' for if it terminates here, it will prove the greatest folly and madness. Let me entreat and persuade you, to turn your thoughts and cares into a nobler channel; to provide for yourselves bags, that wax not old; a treasure in Heaven that decayeth not; and by being 'rich in good works, ready to distribute and willing to communicate, you may lay up in store for yourselves a good

+ Night Thoughts. No. 4.

a good foundation against the time to come, and may lay hold on eternal life.' By meditation on the difference between things feen and unfeen, by faith, prayer and liberality, labour to get clear of worldly affections, and to grow meet for the inheritance of the faints in light. Let your delight be in the word of GoD; in converfing with him; in the exercises of repentance, and faith in Christ, and in refignation to the divine will. ---- Employ fome time also in instructing those that may come after you. Represent to them the vanity of the world, your experience of the divine care and bounty, of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the influences of the Holy Spirit. Exhort, and endeavour to engage them, to chuse the way of truth, and to walk as Christ walked. And let your own temper and example illustrate and enforce all your exhortations. Sir Francis Walfingham, in the decline of his days, wrote thus to his friend, Lord Burleigh, ' We have lived long enough to our fovereign, to our country, and to our fortunes: it is high time we begin to live to ourselves

ourselves and to our Goo.'— Finally, if your time and strength be thus employed, you will find your hearts more and more loosened from the world; you will be eminent in holiness and useful to the last; and, as Eliphaz saith to Job, you will come to your Grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.'+. I shall only add, as he doth, in the following verse, 'Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it and know ye it for your good.'

+ Job v. 26.



DISCOURSE III.

The Fruitfulness of aged Christians considered and urged.

PSALM XCII. 14.

They shall still bring forth Fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing.

T Remember, faith God to Ifrael, the L kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals.' And this is true of all Gop's faithful servants, who entered into early and fincere engagements to be his, that he graciously remembers them. As an evidence of this, he hath made fuitable provision for their continued progress in wisdom and piety, and to prevent their being weary in well-doing. The ordinances which he hath inftituted, and the promises which he hath made in his word, are adapted to answer this important end. Our text is one of these D 3 indipels. precious

precious promises made to old disciples, and, as appears from the foregoing verse, hath a reference to religious ordinances, and their great usefulness in promoting the fruitfulness of the Saints. I desire the particular attention of you, my aged friends, to it; as it will at once suggest to you a most important duty, and a strong encouragement.

The Pfalmift, by a beautiful allegory or figure, represents the righteous, as trees planted in the house of the Lord; and then adds, ' they shall flourish in the courts of our God.' But in one respect, the comparison fails. Trees, when they are grown to their bulk and maturity, begin to decay: then they generally produce less fruit, and what they produce is less valuable, than in former years. But the righteous shall fill bring forth fruit in old age. They shall grow like trees, but not decay like them. Nature indeed decays; but grace, in which their real, valuable growth confifts, shall continue to thrive. They shall be fat, that is, strong and healthy: they shall be flourishing, or (as the word fignifies) green, in holiness, holiness, peace and joy. — For the illustration of these words I would observe, that they express both the duty and the privilege of aged Saints. — Let us consider each.

I. The text expresseth the duty of the righteous:

Namely, to bring forth fruit in old age. It will be proper to consider,—the fruits, which may be expected from them,—and then show, how reasonable it is, that they should produce them.

1. Let us consider the fruits which may be expected from them.

And these are, in general, the fruits of knowledge and holiness. — 'It may be reasonably expected that they should be fruitful in knowledge;' be wise and judicious christians: not children in understanding, while they are old in years, but strong men in Christ; filled with all knowledge, especially of the scripture and divine things, and able to instruct and admonish others. — They should be fruitful likewise 'in holiness and every D 4

good work; ' eminent and exemplary for the discharge of every christian duty; remarkably devout and ferious, just and charitable, humble and heavenly minded. Thus St. Paul intimates, ' that the aged men should be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience: the aged women likewife, that they be in behaviour as becometh holinefs, not false accusers, or evil speakers, not addicted to flander and cenforiousness, not given to much wine, but teachers of good things.' - But let us dwell a little upon the proper fruits of age; the graces which are particularly necessary for aged christians to abound in, and which are peculiarly ornamental and lovely at that season. — One is, great patience, meek-ness and quietness of spirit. This is most needful for them amidst their pains, infirmities and natural decays. If they have accustomed themselves to the government of their passions and to self-denial, it will be easy and natural for them to manifest this amiable disposition. Their expectation of foon leaving this world and all its vexations, and putting off the body

body with all its infirmities, should promote and encrease their refignation to the divine will, and their meekness and gentleness to all about them. - To be weaned from the world and ready for death, is another fruit of age. All, especially the aged, should consider themselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth. Their time is just ended; therefore they should not be anxious about, or defirous of, the riches and honours of this world. They should renounce its trifling pleafures, and be content and thankful, whatever their lot may be. Death and eternity should be much in their thoughts. They should be willing to leave a world, where they know fo little of Gop, can do him fo little fervice; and where their converse with him and enjoyment of him, is fo broken, interrupted and imperfect. - Again, a heavenly conversation is a proper fruit of age. It becomes the old to think much of the end of their journey and their everlasting home. It becomes the righteous to meditate frequently on the falvation, to which they are approaching; to difcourse with one ano-D 5 ther

2. How

ther about their Father's house, its employments, and the happiness, which he hath there provided for all his children, Thus should their affections be fet on things above, and Heaven be the general, delightful fubject of their thoughts and converse. - Once more, a deep concern for the honour of God, the support of religion, and the good of mankind, should be found in all aged christians. Thus should they grow in usefulness; · showing God's strength to this generation, and his power to them that are to come. Their exhortations to others should be frequent and serious, as their words are weighty and impressive. Their prayers should be daily poured out for the plety and happiness of their families, of the church and the world: and they should breathe out their fouls in fervent defires, that Christ and his cause may be glorified thro' the earth. They should, as far as they are able, extend their charity to the necessitous, particularly the aged poor, and especially contribute to support and promote the interest of religion. — Let me now show,

2. How reasonable it is, that such fruits should be found in them.

It may be expected, from confidering the nature of religion, as a vital principle, or the divine life in the foul. It is as natural for the spiritual life to grow, as it is for a living child, except the one and the other be diseased or neglected. If there be no progress in the ways of righteousness, no fruitfulness in old age, it is to be feared, there never was a real principle, no effectual work of grace, in the heart. If some have flourished for a feafon, and then decayed and become unfruitful, it is an evidence, that they never had a root in themselves. If any are good for nothing, when they are old, there is reason to suspect, they have been good for very little all their days. For true grace is growing: therefore the path of the just is compared to ' the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day:' and a religious principle, or a work of regeneration, is compared by our Lord, to 'a well of water fpringing up unto everlafting life.'-D 6 Again,

Again, Fruitfulness may be expected from aged christians, thro' the natural force of habit and custom. Having been so long in Christ's school, we reasonably expect, that they should have made a great progress in knowledge and religious skill: that they will be expert in the exercises of devotion; have a greater command of their passions and tongues, than younger persons; and not be, like them, toffed about with every wind of doctrine, or the sport of vanity and temptation. Ha-ving been trained up from their child-hood in the way, in which they should go, ' when they are old, they will not depart from it.' They have had more acquaintance with, and longer experience of, the goodness of God, the suitableness and preciousness of Christ, the evil of sin, the emptiness of the world, and the pleafures of religion: and therefore their hearts will be more strongly influenced to judge and act accordingly. - Further, they have, on fome accounts, more advantages and fewer temptations than others. They generally have, or might have, less to do with the world than others; less comcommerce and converse with it, and fewer cares and anxieties about it. They have, by length of time, been undeceived in their expectations from it. Confidering the short space before them, they have fewer temptations to oppression, injustice, fraud, envy and discontent. Their bodily decays are a good prefervative from the dangers which others are in, from fleshly lusts and fenfual gratifications. They have less trouble from the appetites and defires of the body, and more time to converse with God, with the Bible and their own hearts, than the young and the bufy. And therefore they ought to be more steady and abundant in the service of God. To this we are to add, that they may expect peculiar affistances from the Spirit of God, in proportion to their many prayers and improvements. 'To him that hath shall be given.' As it may be prefumed that they have highly valued, earnestly fought and carefully cherished, the influences of the spirit of grace; they may expect a more abundant communication of them, and that the effects thereof will appear

in their continued fruitfulness. There is ample provision made in the covenant of grace, that God will carry on the divine life in them; by a fupply of the Spirit of Jesus confirm them to the end: that ' the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.' Thus we have feen, that it is the duty of aged christians to be fruitful in knowledge and holinefs, in patience, in heavenly-mindedness and a zeal for the fupport of religion. - We have also feen, whence it may reasonably be expected that they should be so; even from the nature of religion, as a living principle in the foul; - from their being habituated to the exercises of it; - from some peculiar advantages attending their circumstances; - and above all, from the influences of the spirit. - I observe,

II. The text may be considered as expressing the privilege and happiness of the righteous:

As a gracious promise made to them, that they 'sfhall flourish in the courts of Gop, Goo, and be fruitful in old age; that time which impairs their strength and every thing elfe in the natural world, shall improve their graces, meliorate or refine their fruit. And this they are to expect from divine influences attending the means of grace. God will not forfake them, nor take away his holy spirit from them: he will perform the good work begun in them, till the day of Christ. His powerful grace shall be exerted to preserve them green and flourishing to the end. The faithfulness of God is engaged to do this. Therefore the Pfalmist adds, in the verse following the text, ' to show that the Lord is upright,' or faithful to his promifes. He then fubjoins his own testimony to the truth of this: 'He is my rock;' I have found him kind, powerful and faithful in supporting the religious life in my foul, under all my difficulties and trials: and you will also find that ' there is no unrighteousness in him.' But it may be asked, is this always the case? Do we not hear aged Christians, who appear to have been eminently holy and useful, fometimes lamenting and comcomplaining of, their leanness and unfruitfulness? And do we not see other aged persons, tho' they make no such complaints, evidently showing to all who know them, that they are almost fruitless and worthless? What shall we say to these things? 'Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!' -- As to the first fort; who complain of their leanness and unfruitfulness; I would observe, that they fometimes mistake their own case and state. They find their affection to God and the Redeemer not fo warm and lively as formerly; that there is more languor and distraction in their devotions; that they cannot fo eafily fix and command their thoughts, and are less affected with divine things than in time past. But all this may be owing to the decays of nature; their faculties may be weakened; their memories impaired: and it is well known, that aged persons are less affected with objects of joy and forrow than others. Their minds are less impressible than formerly. This is the natural consequence of age; and many middle-aged, yea young perfons, of a relaxed habit habit, weak nerves and languid spirits, experience the fame. But consider, my companions in this tribulation, that, tho' the fervour of the affections may be leffened, the judgment may be more fettled, the will more determined for God and religion than heretofore, and we may with firmer purpose of heart cleave to him. Sin may be more mortified than ever it hath been, and the foul gradually advancing towards maturity in grace and fitness for Heaven. We may have a more calm and yet resolute zeal for Christ and his interest than ever. These are to be confidered as marks of fruitfulness and evidences for glory; and when these are experienced, the decrease of spiritual warmth and affection should not discourage us. - Aged christians may also be led to these complaints, by mistaking what their present duty is. You are sometimes ready to blame and condemn yourfelves, because you do so little to serve God and your generation. But probably you are incapable of active fervices. Submission and patience seem to be the peculiar duties of your age and circumstances.

cumstances. Allow me to quote in this connection, that beautiful representation, which Milton makes of his case, when he is lamenting his own blindness.

Gob doth not need

Either man's works, or his own gifts.—Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they ferve him best.—His state
Is kingly. Thousands, at his bidding, speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.

They also ferve, who only stand and wait. †

But with regard to some aged persons, their unfruitfulness is their own fault. God doth his part, but they will not do theirs. They are too much engaged in, and devoted to, the world; wrapt up in their own secular interest, and will do nothing or little, for the good of their fellow-creatures. They have contracted a habit of complaining; are fretful and peevish to all connected with them, and will neither speak, nor look chearfully: whereas 'the joy of the Lord is the strength of the soul.' They neglect to mortify the sins that easily beset them, and grow formal in religious duties. They

+ Milton's Sonnet. No. 20.

They take no pains to exercise their faculties, and therefore these decay; just as some lose their limbs for want of motion and exercise. On these accounts, instead of being fruitful in old age, they are like shrubs or the heath in the defart. But nothing contributes fo much to their unfruitfulness, as their becoming indifferent to religious ordinances; thinking themselves too wise and too good to need any further improvement; or, if they attend them, taking no pains to impress the truths and motives of the gospel on their hearts, and to engage their fouls in the exercises of prayer and praise, There is one error, into which aged chriftians are apt to fall, and which is of most pernicious influence: but I chuse to express it in the words of the pious Dr. Owen; ' they are ready to think and fay, that the preaching and religious exercises, which they had in former days, were far to be preferred above what they now enjoy: and they despise the ministers of the present age in comparison with their fathers. But the change is in themselves. They have lost their spiritual appetite.

appetite. Being grown full of themselves and conceited of their own abilities, they have not that taste and relish for the word, which they had formerly: and this is both the cause, and the evidence, of the decay of all their other graces.' + So that the fault is their own. They are not straitened in God, but in themselves. But with regard to many aged christians, it must, in justice, be said, that their attendance upon ordinances is most regular, early and ferious, and their respect to their ministers very honourable and encouraging: and it is much to be wished, that all the younger would imitate their example. - Having thus confidered the text, as expressing both the duty and the privilege of aged faints, I proceed to make some improvement of the subject.

APPLICATION.

1. Let aged christians labour after greater fruitfulness.

If you are not sensible, Fathers, that there is room for further improvement in grace,

⁺ Owen's Med. on the glory of Christ. p. 60.

grace, you have not yet learned the first instruction in Christ's religion; to be poor in spirit, humble and lowly in heart. If you are not fensible, that you are in danger of decays and spiritual declenfions; that they will prove injurious, and may be destructive to your fouls, you are but children in understanding; yea, know nothing yet as you ought to know. But I hope and believe you are fensible of these things. Let me intreat you therefore to make it your great ambition to be fruitful, growing christians; and in this let all your cares and thoughts center. To that end, be often examining, what fruit you produce; what ground you gain in the christian race; and how the work of grace goeth on in your fouls. Keep near to God by prayer, and watch in holy duties against that drowfiness and languor, to which your infirmities expose you. Stir up yourselves to take hold on GoD; as ' from Him all your fruit is found.' + If you cannot address his throne with as much affection as formerly, do it at least with as much seriousness. - Let your delight be in the law

law of the Lord, and meditate in it day and night. 'Then you will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in its feafon; and whose leaf shall not wither.' + Think of the dying words of the aged and learned Salmasius. 'Oh! I have lost a world of time: had I but one year longer, I would fpend it in reading and meditating upon David's Pfalms and Paul's Epistles.' - Remember also, that the promise in the text is made to those who are planted in the house of the Lord.' Continue your love to Gop's house and worship, and forsake not the good way, in which you have found fo much edification and comfort. Live by faith in the all-fufficient Saviour, and abide in him to whom you are united, as the branches in the vine; and then you will bring forth much fruit. How dreadful will it be, if, after all the kindness you have received from God, you give him reason to fay of you, as he did of the Jews, 'Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' + To excite you to this holy ambition

[†] Pfalm i. 3.

ambition, to be fruitful growing chriftians, confider, — that your own peace and comfort depend upon it. To find grace thriving while nature is decaying. will fupport you under your infirmities, and open a fountain of pleasure, when all other fources of it are dried up. It will remove your doubts, enliven your hopes, and brighten your prospects of glory. After the Apostle Paul had described his persecutions and sufferings, he adds. ' Nevertheless we faint not:' and the reason follows, 'tho' our outward man perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed, or gains fresh strength, day by day.'+ If they, who had an appearance of religion, and some zeal for it in their younger days, become cold, felfish and indifferent, what comfort can they have? Nay indeed, as I hinted above, it feems a proof of a heart naturally barren and destitute of faving grace. - Consider again, that your continued fruitfulness will be for the honour of God and your profession. It will show, as the Psalmist observes, that 'he is your rock, and that there-

there is no unrighteousness in him.' ' Herein is my Father glorified, faith Christ, that ye bring forth much fruit.' It reflects an honour upon his word and ordinances, and the influences of his fpirit, that they make the aged, with all their natural decays, spiritually strong and healthy, and vigorous in every grace. And finally, it will be an example and an encouragement to others. It may lead the young to think more favourably of religion and to love the house of God. They will suspect the usefulness of the means of grace, if they fee you declining. If you, who have long tried the ways of God, forfake them or go on flowly or mournfully in them, what a discouragement will this be to them! For their fake and the fake of religion, do not put a stumbling-block before them. - Let these motives engage you 'not to be slothful in business but fervent in spirit, ferving the Lord.' See that the graces of the christian character be in you and abound, that you may not be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; that you may adorn his doctrine,

doctrine, and hold fast your considence to the end.

2. They who would bring forth fruit in old age, must begin betimes to do so.

My young Friends, if you defire a holy, honourable and happy old age, you must early cultivate your understandings, be engrafted into Christ by faith, and be joined to the Lord by a folemn felf-dedication. You must now lay in a stock of useful knowledge; contract habits of piety, subjection and felf-government, and take the greatest pains to root out and subdue those passions and desires which are contrary to them. Religion is to be learned as a science, by thought and reading, practice and habit; and all, under the influence of divine grace, which must be daily and earneftly fought. If you trifle away your youth, it is to be feared you will trifle away your age too. While you despise or pity old triflers, remember hat it was the idleness and barrenness of heir Youth, that made them worthless and despicable in age. I speak upon a upposition that you may live to be old: but

but that may not happen. It is great odds against any one, that he will not You now enjoy the means of grace. God now expects fruit from you. Year after year he comes, seeking it: and if he find none, he may say, cut down this fruitless tree; why cumbereth it the ground? To the Young, to all, I say, The Axe is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.' +——I add, once more,

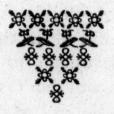
3. Learn the great usefulness of publick ordinances.

Let me again remind you, that our text is spoken of those who are planted in the house of the Lord; that is, who love his house and ordinances; statedly and seriously attend upon them, and strive to improve them to the purposes for which they were instituted. They may be regularly attended, and yet the soul continue barren. There may be the leaves of an outward profession, but no fruit. Unless you are planted in God's house

by faith and love, and make a ferious, folemn business of religious exercises, engaging the heart and affections in them, your attendance will be vain. But where there are right dispositions and views, ordinances are adapted to promote the fruitfulness of christians, and God hath promifed his bleffing with them. The Lord's Supper is particularly fuited to further our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. In a word, all christian ordinances have an evident tendency to revive and mair ain the impressions of religion; to ftrengthen aged christians under their burthens; to affift their thoughts in meditation and devotion; to comfort them with the views of the divine promifes; to make the glories of their father's house more familiar and delightful to their minds, and to reconcile them to the thoughts of death. - I conclude with addressing you all, and especially the Aged, in the words of the Apostle: 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound E 2 yet

yet more and more in all knowledge and judgment: that ye may be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ: being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Christ Jesus, to the glory and praise of God.'+ Amen.

+ Phil. i. 8-11.



DISCOURSE IV.

Caleb's Reflection on the Goodness and Faithfulness of God to him.

Joshua xiv. 10.

And now behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and sive years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now lo, I am this day, fourscore and sive years old.

THE glory of young men, faith solomon, is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the gray head.' The strength of young men is truly their glory, when it is employed in the service of God: and the hoary head is indeed a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness.' It was the glory of the person spoken of in the text, E 3

that when he was a young man, he was eminent for courage and fleady piety; and when old, for the vigour of his body and the holiness of his foul. As I intend, in this discourse, more particularly to confult the affiftance and encouragement of my aged friends, I would recommend to them the temper and example of this aged faint, even Caleb; and endeavour at the fame time to fuggest some things, which may be useful to all. - We read in the hiftory of Israel, that, when they were come to the borders of Canaan, Moses, by divine direction, fent out twelve men, one of each tribe, to fearch that land. When they returned, they brought a very favourable account of the fruitfulness of it; but reprefented the inhabitants as fo numerous and strong, that there was no probability of getting possession of it. At this report the people were angry and rebellious. Caleb and Joshua, two of the spies, endeavoured to appeale them, by affuring them, that they were well able, with God's affiftance, to get possession of the land. Caleb particularly exerted himfelf

felf with great prudence and courage on this occasion, but to no purpose. God therefore declared, that all that rebellious generation should die in the wilderness; and only Caleb and Joshua among the spies, and fome other humble, pious Israelites, should enter the land. It was particularly promifed to Caleb, 'Because my servant Caleb had another spirit, different from that of the other spies, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land, where-into he went, and his feed shall posfess it. + Thus Gop promised Caleb, that, for his diftinguished piety, fidelity and courage, he should live to enter into the land of Canaan, and have an inheritance there. We find him, in this chapter, claiming that promise. He reminds 70shua, who was then the leader of Israel, of what Moses, in the name of God, had fworn to him, because he wholly followed the Lord; and he claims that particular portion of the land, which had been promised him. When he puts in his claim, he speaks with great seriousness and devotion; acknowledging the divine care and fidelity, E 4

+ Numb. xiv. 24.

fidelity, and looking back with pleafure on his own conduct, and Goo's approbation of it. 'And now behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he faid, these forty and five years, even fince the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourfcore and five years old. - The words, in this connection, will fuggest four useful remarks, which I shall consider and lead you to improve.

- I. It is God that keepeth us alive.
- II. The Aged have peculiar reason to make this acknowledgment.
- III. It is a great fatisfaction to aged christians to reflect on their obedience to God, and the accomplishment of his promises to them; and,
- IV. The experience which aged chriftians have had of GoD's goodness and faithfulness, is a strong encouragement to hope and trust in him.
 - I. It is God who keepeth us alive.

This

This is a very obvious remark: but fince for that reason we are too apt to forget it and neglect the due improvement of it, it is proper to illustrate it, and affift your reflection upon it. It is of the utmost importance that our minds be furnished with those maxims, which are most weighty and useful; and they should be made familiar to the thoughts, that we may have recourse to them in every emergency, to direct our conduct and support our hearts. This is one of the most weighty and useful; that our lives and all the events of them, are under Gop's direction and at his disposal. That he keepeth us alive, is evident from his universal providence. 'His kingdom ruleth over all; and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him.' The scriptures often remind us of this, and urge it as a motive to religious fear, gratitude and obedience. They teach us 'that in him we live and move and have our being: that in him is the breath of every living thing and the spirit of all mankind:' that he gave it at first, and that he taketh it away. God claims this with awful majefty, as E 5 his

his prerogative! 'Behold I kill and I make alive: I wound and I heal.' His fervants acknowledge this with readiness and pleasure. So Caleb in the text, ' Behold the Lord hath kept me alive.' So David; 'Bless the Lord, O my foul, who healeth all thy difeases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction.' Thus St. Paul acknowledgeth, 'Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day.' - More particularly, God preferveth us from many accidents, that would be fatal to us. 'He giveth his Angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways.' They deliver us from many evils which we are not fenfible of, and perform many kind offices for us, which we do not and cannot perceive. - God maintains our health or raifeth us up from threatening diforders. 'To God the Lord belong the iffues or escapes from death:' and he is known by the name of the Lord that healeth us.' + --- He giveth us those things that are needful for the body; fupplieth us with food and raiment, and every thing necessary for the con-

continuance and support of our lives. Yea, his bleffing makes them ferviceable for these purposes. For, 'man liveth not by bread alone, but by the word or bleffing of GoD:' without this, as the Prophet Haggai intimates, ' we should eat and drink, yet not be fatisfied; and clothe us, but not be warm.' + When diseases and deaths slie round about us, he preserveth us safe and unhurt. 'The Lord is our keeper: the Lord preserveth us from evil; preserveth our going-out and coming-in.' -- We have reason devoutly to acknowledge, that He keepeth us alive, when we confider the frailty of our natures, and the difeases and cafualties, to which we are liable. Who can fay, he hath been his own guardian? That he hath maintained fuch temperance and regularity of life, and fuch a care to guard against dangers, that he hath been his own preferver? Who that thinks at all, but must look higher and acknowledge the providence of God, the God of his falvation? This is especially proper and becoming, as our lives and com-E 6 forts

forts have been forfeited by fin. Every benefit we enjoy, every breath we draw, is owing to his wonderful patience, and it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not confumed.' - Let us observe.

II. The Aged have peculiar reason to make this acknowledgment.

Behold, faith Caleb, the Lord hath kept me alive, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and I am this day eighty-five years old.' The longer we live, the greater reason we have to acknowledge the protection and care of Goo. When any arrive at old age, it is proper to do this, with peculiar feriousness and gratitude; considering that, like Caleb, they have been wandering all their days in a wilderness: to that this world is often compared, and none enter more feelingly into the justice and beauty of the comparison than the Aged. Dangers furround us on every fide. It is a wonder, that the barrenness of this wilderness, its distressing scenes, and the little refreshment which a foul, intent upon a better country, can find here, do not more

more speedily exhaust the spirits and confume the days of those who wander in it. - Again, Caleb had feen the whole generation, that came out of Egypt with him, dying before him; and there were very few alive, who had been the companions of his youth and his travels. The Aged cannot but often reflect upon this; what numbers they have furvived! what defolation death hath made in the churches, families and towns, to which they were related! how many of the young and healthy, who were likely to out-live them, have fallen in the wildernefs, while they continue! - Their own infirmities render the acknowledgment of Gop's preservation of them almost natural and peculiarly proper. Small things greatly affect them. A little change of weather discomposeth them. A slight cold and fever disables, and often destroys, them. Troubles, which in early life they could eafily have furmounted, hang long and heavy upon them, and fometimes press them into the dust: and when they confider that what strength remains is labour and forrow, their long continuance

in life is an aftonishment to them. As they cannot but suppose that every opening year will be their last, every returning year displays new wonders of goodness and mercy; and it is becoming in them gratefully to acknowledge it. Thus David the aged faith, 'Thou, O Lord, art my trust from my youth. I am as a wonder to many,' that I am yet alive after fo many fatigues, dangers and infirmities; ' but thou art my strong refuge. Thou hast done great things, O GoD; who is like unto thee?' + ---- Further,

III. It is a great fatisfaction to aged faints to reflect on their obedience to Gop, and the accomplishment of his promifes to them.

Caleb speaks of both these with pleafure. He reminds Joshua, that he had wholly followed the Lord; that the Lord had kept him alive, as he faid; that the word, which the Lord spake to Moses concerning him, had been fulfilled. -In like manner, it affords aged christians great delight to reflect, that, thro' divine grace, they have wholly followed the the Lord: that when, as in the case of the Israelites, the generality have been disobedient and rebellious, have tempted and provoked the most high, they have retained their integrity and been, upon the whole, faithful to their profession and their vows. They cannot indeed, but be conscious of many imperfections and defects in their obedience, and will be often dropping a penitential tear over the fins of their youth and riper years. Yet having this testimony, that their hearts were right with Gop, and that their governing defire and main care have been to pleafe him; this affords them great comfort, and is their support in those evil days, in which there is no earthly pleafure. It is comfortable to them to think, that they have devoted their vigorous days to God, and not brought him only the poor remains of their time and strength. It is their joy to think, that they have not been entirely useless in the world, the burthens of the earth, the cumberers of the ground, and the scandal of religion. When they reflect, what an untoward generation they have lived in; what temptations

tations they have had to youthful lufts: how prone the love of the world is to destroy the love of God in the days of health and ease, 'their rejoicing is this, the testimony of their consciences, that in fimplicity and godly fincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of Goo, they have had their conversation in the world;' that Religion hath been uppermost in their thoughts, and it hath been their chief business in life to serve Gop and fave their own fouls .--- Further, it is a great fatisfaction to them to reflect on God's goodness and faithfulness to them: that he hath hitherto supplied all their wants, fustained their hearts and supported them under those afflictions, which they thought would have been too hard for them to bear. They recollect with gratitude and delight, that grace, which begun, maintained and improved the divine life in their fouls, amidst innumerable temptations from without and within: that, tho' they have fallen into fin, they have been recovered and not fuffered to perish in it; and tho' they have fallen into trouble, they have been prevented from

from making ship-wreck of faith and a good conscience. It is pleasant to them to trace up all these streams to the fountain; to confider them as the displays of rich and free grace; as the accomplishment of the promifes of God, and proofs of his fidelity. Their mercies were fweet in the enjoyment, and are fweet in the reflection, when they confider them as founded on the covenant of grace, made with all true believers thro' Christ Jesus. And this is the delightful conclusion of every reflection upon them, 'The Lord hath been good to me, as he faid: The Lord hath fulfilled the word, which he fpake concerning his fervant.' --- I proceed to observe,

IV. The experience, which aged faints have had of God's goodness and faithfulness, is a strong encouragement to them to hope and trust in him.

Caleb's design, in repeating the divine promises and recollecting the divine goodness, was to encourage himself in the Lord his Goo; that he should be assisted to gain and possess the promised inheritance.

tance, as well as to claim a title to it. See v. 12. Since God hath kept me alive, 'give me the mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day. If so be the Lord will be with me, or (as it may be better rendered, for he feems to have no doubt about it) feeing the Lord will be with me, I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord faid.' Thus the experience which aged christians have had of God's care and fidelity, is an earnest of further favours from him, and an encouragement to their hope and confidence. It gives them a chearful perfuasion that he will still be with them; that he who hath delivered and doth deliver, will still deliver. They can plead with David, 'O God thou hast taught me from my youth: now when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.' + They expect further, yea greater, troubles and difficulties in the remaining stages of the wilderness: but they know, that the manna, with which they have been fed, will not fail, nor the cloud of protection, which hath sheltered them, be withdrawn, till their wanwanderings are over. They know that Gop hath promised, 'Even to your old age, I am He; and even to hoar hairs, will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.' And this they may depend upon, fince ' by him they have been borne up and carried even from the womb.' + May they not expect, that he, who hath fuftained them hitherto in the spiritual warfare, will strengthen their feeble hands for the remaining combat; and that ' he who hath begun the good work in them, will perform it until the day of Christ?' May they not be confident, that he who hath led them fo' long in the wilderness, will bring them into the good land, which he hath promised? Yea, at last raise their withered limbs and perished bodies strong and fair, to share in the honours of their Redeemer's fecond coming, and the joys of his everlafting kingdom? Thus David, in his old age, argued, 'Thou who haft shown me great and fore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.' + --- Having thus illustrated the observations arising from the text, I proceed to make a more general improvement of the subject.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us all remember our constant dependance upon GoD; and learn those useful instructions, which that is adapted to teach us.

Whatever be our age, God hath kept us alive hitherto. Let us own this with thankfulness. How abfurd and ungrateful is it for men to boaft and be proud of their health and strength, (for men may be health-proud, as well as purfe-proud) and never to acknowledge the hand of God, 'who giveth to all life and breath and all things.' Let me address you in the language of the Pfalmist, 'O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; which holdeth our foul in life, and fuffereth not our feet to be moved.' † ---- Doth God keep us alive? This shows the reasonableness

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of prayer, as expressive of our dependance upon him, and as the way to preserve a devout sense of it upon the heart. It shows that our expressions of prayer and thanksgiving at our meals, should be serious and thoughtful. - This teacheth us to use the proper means of preserving and restoring health, in a humble subordination to the divine bleffing; and it strongly reproves the iniquity of those, who seek to the physician but not to the Lord. -The remembrance of our dependance upon God would tend to restrain luxury and intemperance, and all those irregularities and excesses, which shorten men's days. It would prevent our 'undertaking any thing that is hazardous to life or health, when not called out to it by providence. - It will likewise keep our minds composed amidst the evils we feel or fear, and tend to reconcile us to the removal of our dearest friends and to our own, since our times are in Gop's hands. It will make us folicitous to fay of all our fchemes, ' If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that,' and engage us to feek his bleffing. - And finally, it will

be a powerful motive to fecure his friendship, by vigorously pursuing his fervice. In this view, Moses urgeth the thought, ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and obey his voice and cleave to-him; for HE is thy life and the length of thy days.' +

2. What hath been faid should be an inducement to young persons to follow the Lord fully.

Caleb, as a reward for fo doing, lived to be very old, and had great pleasure in reflecting on his former conduct. This use an ancient jewish writer makes of the ftory: 'The Lord gave strength unto Caleb, which remained with him to his old age; fo that he entered on the high places of the land, and his feed obtained it for an heritage, that all the children of Ifrael might see, that it is good to follow the Lord.' + - Following the Lord fully may conduce to a long life, - it will certainly promote the happiness of life. — It may conduce to a long life. Young persons are generally desirous to live

⁺ Deut. xxx. 20. + Ecclus. xlvi. 9, 10.

live to old age. Now religion and steadfast obedience to God are, in their own nature, a probable means of attaining to it. For they prevent those excesses which shorten the days of youth, and by reason of which, men do not live out half their days. Religion contributes to health and peace and chearfulness. 'In wisdom's right hand are length of days. What man is he that defireth life and loveth many days, that he may fee good? Let him depart from evil and do good.' + Solomon confirms this fentiment, 'The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.' † God will reward early piety with long life, if he feeth that, upon the whole, it is best for you. - But it will certainly promote the happiness of life. For 'godliness hath the promife of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.' Besides the immediate pleafure attending a course of stedfast obedience, you will have delightful reflections on what is past: that you have fpent your vigorous days in the fervice of God, and are growing up to

to a greater maturity for Heaven; while youthful finners are dead in their fins, turned into hell and fuffering the fatal irretrievable consequences of their own cowardice and folly. Instead of 'possessing the iniquities of your youth; having your bones full of them, and mourning at the last, when the flesh and body are confumed,' you will have unspeakable pleafure in being able to appeal to God, with Hezekiah, ' that you have walked before him in truth, and with an upright heart, and have done that which was good in his fight.' In confequence of this, you will find him gracious and faithful in affifting, fupporting and rewarding you. Remember therefore thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the days come and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt fay, I have no pleasure in them;' none but what religion affords and hope infpires. - I only add,

3. The Example of Caleb is worthy the imitation of aged christians.

To you, my honoured Fathers, I would respectfully address. Hath God kept you alive

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alive fourscore or threescore years? Take this good old man for your model, and endeavour to be like-minded. Let your fpeech, like his, be ferious and devout, the remainder of your days be devoted to God's fervice, and continue to hope and trust in him. — Let your speech be serious and devout. When, like Caleb, you are mentioning your age, your cotemporaries, or what happened in the former part of your lives, let it be done . with feriousness; with an humble and thankful acknowledgment of God. Say not 'I have lived fo long, or am fo old,' but, 'the Lord hath kept me alive.' Bear testimony to his goodness and faithfulness. Speak of his care in preserving you hitherto, with admiration and thankfulness. Thus the Patriarch Facob faid, 'God who hath fed me all my life long to this day, and redeemed me from all evil.' + --- Further, let the remainder of your lives be faithfully devoted to God's service. One important branch of this is, humbly to relate your own experience for the instruction and consolation of others.

+ Gen. xlviii. 15.

So Caleb did; 'when my brethren were disobedient and rebellious, I wholly followed the Lord my Gop.' Let your relations and friends, especially your defcendants, know, what God hath done for you, and what he hath enabled you to do for him. Affure them, as from long observation and experience you can, that fin is bitterness in the end; that God's commandments are not grievous; that an interest in Christ is the good part, and that a life fpent in communion with God, is the pleasantest life any man can lead. Such declarations will come with peculiar gracefulness and force from perfons of your age, when attended with that modefty and humility, which your long acquaintance with your own imperfections and the constitution of the gospel, will be likely to promote: for you must be strangely ignorant of both, if you speak of your experiences with vain-glory and boafting. All will be afcribed by you to the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus, and you will boast only in the Lord. Thus David in his old age refolved, 'My tongue shall show forth thy salvation, and talk

talk of thy righteousness all the day long; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will show thy strength to this generation and thy power to every one that is to come.' + --- Again, you are to ferve God, your preserver, by being active in all the duties of life, which you have ability to discharge. You may not perhaps be able to fay, as Caleb (in the verse following the text) 'As yet I am as strong this day, as I was forty years ago: ' nevertheless, what natural strength remaineth should be employed for God. But I hope your spiritual strength is much greater than it was forty years ago; that you are more able to carry on the christian combat, to drive out remaining corruptions, and will be faithful unto death. You are also to serve God by humbly waiting all the intimations of his will; by bearing up contentedly and chearfully under the infirmities of age, and striving and watching that your tempers may not be foured by your own afflictions, or the vices and follies of the rifing generation. -Finally, your past experience should be F 2

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an incentive to you to encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Hope in him, that he will yet fulfill his promifes, and particularly that he will never forfake you. The last words of the aged and pious Dr. Guyse were, 'O my God, thou hast always been with me, and wilt not leave me now.' God may prolong your wanderings in the wilderness and add many days yet to your wearisome pilgrimage: but remember, Canaan is before you; an inheritance, which will abundantly repay all the labours and fatigues of the wilderness. Thither Gop hath promised to bring you. 'Hold fast, therefore, the profession of your faith, and the considence of your hope, without wavering, firm unto the end: for he is faithful who hath promifed.'



DISCOURSE V.

The Defign and Improvement of useless

Days and wearisome Nights.

Jos vii. 3.

So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.

It is an observation of Mr. Addison, that 'Enquiries after happiness and rules for attaining it, are not, on some accounts, so necessary and useful to mankind, as the arts of consolation, and supporting one's self under affliction.' Convinced of this from the frequent scenes of distress, to which I have been a witness, I think I can scarce engage in a more benevolent design, than to offer assistance and comfort to my suffering fellow-creatures. The book of Job surnisheth us with excellent materials for this desirable work. I propose at this

time to confider that circumstance of Job's affliction, which is mentioned in the text, as it particularly fuits the case of the Aged, whom I am now more immediately to address. This holy man is describing his melancholy fituation, and the fad effects of his bodily diforders. These increafed the weight of his other calamities, and made him desirous of death, as the only fure relief. ' As a fervant, faith he, after a hard day's labour, earnestly defireth the shadow of the evening; and as a hireling looketh for the reward of his work; so do I long for my release from this mifery, (for thus the fense must be fupplied;) fince I am made to possess months of vanity, that is, useless and unprofitable months; and wearisome nights, painful restless nights, are appointed to me: I possess them as my inheritance; for so the word fignifies.' - From hence we may observe.

L That useless days and wearisome nights may be the portion of the best of men.

II. When

II. When it is fo, they are to be confidered as the appointment of Providence and improved accordingly.

I. Useless days and wearisome nights may be allotted to the best of men;

To those, who, like Job, are righteous and upright in the fight of God, and have been, like him, healthy, vigorous and useful. Months of vanity are months void of health, activity and usefulness: and these come as a kind of inheritance to us; for 'man is born to trouble, as the fparks naturally fly upwards.' This is almost always the case of the Aged. The days of old age are called, ' the evil days in which there is no pleasure;' no earthly pleasure. But this to an aged Christian is not fo grievous, as that they are months of vanity, in which he is capable of doing little for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures. — This is fometimes owing to the decay of the faculties; fo that the poor fufferer becomes ignorant, forgetful and helplefs, like a child. Sometimes it arises from the decay of bodily strength and vigour, and a con-

continued fuccession of aches and forrows: fo that the afflicted person cannot move at all, or not without much pain; or all his vital actions are attended with a certain uneafiness, which is sometimes less tolerable than pain itself. Hence an ancient writer calls old age, ' a middle state between health and sickness. When nature bears much, it can do little. The man is unfit for business; he becomes liftless in religious duties, yea can scarce do any thing, that will turn to account. This is often the cafe with others, befides the Aged; when they are visited with acute diseases or labour under a lingering illness. Thro' weakness of body and pining fickness, they (as Job expresseth it) 'never eat with pleasure;' and can neither work nor move with any life or comfort. It is some relief, in such a case, for the sufferer to have a good night and refreshing sleep; and thereby get a little strength to discharge the duties of life or to bear its burdens. -But Job had, and many have, wearisome nights appointed to them. Some are vifited with pain on their beds, and the mulmultitude of their bones with strong pain. Some, if they lie down, cannot breathe, and must therefore be supported in an uneafy posture. Others, thro' disagreeable fensations, are reftless; and the little sleep they have, is diffurbed and unrefreshing. Sometimes dejection of spirit brings on a variety of fears; which, tho' groundless and unreasonable, are as troublesome as if they were just, and cannot be conquered. There is often an uneafiness and restlessness of mind without any apparent cause, which drives away sleep or makes it very unquiet. In weak constitutions, a little change in the air and weather deprives them of this refreshment. Anxious thoughts and the pressure of other afflictions, destroy the repose of the night: fo that the fufferer cannot forget his forrows by sleep, but they haunt his very dreams. He fometimes counts the hours in a long fuccession: the time appears dreadfully tedious, and he arises in the morning weakened and tired, instead of being refreshed. Thus Job describes his case, in the verse following the text, and many feel the justice of his description; · When

When I lie down, I fay, when shall I arise and the night be gone? and I am full of toffings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My bed doth not comfort me, nor my couch ease my com-plaint. v. 13. This is sometimes the case with God's dearest children, and especially of the Aged. Now, what shall support and comfort them under so heavy an affliction? There is nothing fo well adapted to do it, as this thought, that it is the Lord's doing: and that is the fecond observation from the text:

II. Months of vanity and wearisome nights are to be confidered as the appointment of God, and to be improved accordingly.

This is implied in the expression here used; they are appointed to me; compared with verse 1. of this chapter; 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? For who fixeth and determineth his time, but the great God, the Lord of life and time? In the 14th verse, Job expressly ascribes his wearisome nights to the providence of GoD: 'Thou fcareft me with dreams.

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dreams.' And indeed, nothing can be more plain from the dictates of reason and the language of scripture, especially of this book. The original constitution of human nature was formed by Him. The materials of which it is composed; the food, air, and other things on which it depends for support, are all of such a nature as to intimate that it was intended to wear out and decay. The hand of God is to be acknowledged in all our diseases. He woundeth and maketh fore. He giveth sleep and causeth it to fly from our eyes. Whatever natural causes may occasion pain, weakness and incapacity, all are to be traced up to the divine direction and appointment. He allotteth to us whatever is painful and difagreeable by day or by night. It is a very comfortable thought, that he appoints them, or (as the word is fometimes translated) numbers them. The number, the degree, the continuance of our infirmities, are all exactly marked out and determined by him: and they shall be no more, press no heavier and continue no longer, than he fees it best, in order to answer his wife F 6

and gracious purposes concerning us. -Now, he appoints to his creatures useless months and wearifome nights, for fome or other of these important ends: namely, to restrain an earthly spirit and bring them to ferious confideration and piety, - to exercise their graces, especially their humility, patience, meekness and contentment, - to make them useful to others, - and to confirm their hopes and awaken their defires of a bleffed immortality. -God intends hereby,

1. To restrain an earthly spirit, and bring them to ferious confideration and piety.

That the world and present things have generally an undue influence upon our hearts and indispose us for the concerns of Religion, is evident by melancholy experience: the best christians see and feel and lament it. In order to restrain the inordinate love of the world, God is pleased to visit men with pain and sickness. When they are continually toiling about the world, rifing up early, fitting up late, and wearying themselves in the pursuit

pursuit of it, neither their ministers, nor their consciences, can convince them, that they are too eager and are endangering their own fouls. Gop then taketh the work into his own hands; confines them by pain and weakness, and renders them incapable of their former hot pursuits. giveth them time to think and confider, which otherwise they would not have taken. He obligeth them to fit alone, and keepeth their eyes waking, that they may commune with their own hearts. He takes away their pleasing satisfastion in earthly things, that they may fee their emptiness, and think of something better. The fmarting rod leads their thoughts to his hand; brings them to repentance, that they have fo much forgotten him in their days of health and prosperity: and whereas before they prayed not at all, or only in a cold formal manner, now, as the Prophet expresseth it, 'In trouble they visit God and pour out a prayer, when his chastening is upon them.' + Allow me, in this connection, to mention an instance of a young man, who had long been confined

fined with a difeafed limb, and was near his diffolution. When, at the defire of a friend, his loathfome fore was uncovered, he faid, 'There it is; and a precious treasure it hath been to me! It faved me from the folly and vanity of youth: it made me cleave to Gop as my only portion, and to eternal glory as my only hope; and I think it hath now brought me very near to my Father's house.' - The Aged are often unwilling to refign worldly labours and cares, when they might properly do it: and fome of them are never fatisfied with earth, till they are buried in it. Their defires enlarge as they advance in years, and they grow more covetous of wealth, the lefs they want it, and the less time and spirit they have to enjoy it. God, therefore, in compassion to them, lays them aside; shows them by irrefistible arguments, that it is time to have done; and finds them work enough in the necessary care of their pained dying bodies. Thus they are led to think feriously of God, of themselves and eternity; to see their dependance on the most High; to feek his favour

favour through Christ, while it may be obtained, and look out for a firmer support, than earthly things can afford. By frequent pains and infirmities, God keeps his people always watchful against the world, that encroaching enemy; makes them apply with greater diligence to the most important business of Religion, and leads them to be daily expecting and preparing for, that great and awful change, which will fix their eternal state.

Further, God designs hereby,

2. To exercise and strengthen their graces, especially their humility, patience, meekness and contentment.

It is very difficult habitually to practife these virtues; especially if we have long enjoyed health and ease. But when God toucheth our bone and our slesh, he calls us to, and disposeth us for, the exercise of them. — He teacheth us Humility, by showing us what vile bodies we have: on how many things they depend for health, activity and repose, which are not in our own power; that we may not be proud of them, nor take too much pains

pains about them; but be chiefly folicitous about the welfare of the immortal fpirit. He brings men, by fuch afflictions, to fee and own his justice; to humble themselves for sin, and accept the punishment of their iniquity: and fo they are disposed to fall in with his faving defign, as exhibited in the gospel, and to trust in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in themselves. He thus brings down their high thoughts of themselves; shows them that they are not of so much consequence to the world, as they thought themselves to be; that their retirement and incapacity cause no chasm in it; and that He can carry on his schemes without them. - He exerciseth their Patience; a most important grace in this state of trial! He shows the sufferers what degree of felf-government, what command of their passions, they have attained. By repeated strokes he brings down the fretful reluctant spirit, and makes it lie at his footstool calm and composed. 'Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience,' or proof of the fufferer's integrity and God's supporting goodness. - By obliging them them to depend upon others for help under their infirmities, he teacheth them *Meekness* and thankfulness; softeneth their spirits and openeth their hearts to tenderness and gratitude. He sometimes keeps them long in this afflicted state, that patience may have its perfect work, and their souls be made humble, submissive and tractable, as a weaned child.—Another design of providence is,

3. To make them useful to others.

It is an observation of a lively writer, that 'God makes one half of the human species a moral lesson to the other.' Thus he set forth Job, as an example of enduring a iction and of patience. He showeth the healthy and active, by the infirmities of some who are of their own age, how soon and how easily their strength may be weakened in the way. He leads them, by a view of the decays of age, to conclude, that the decline of life is a very unfit time to begin the great work of Religion, or make any considerable progress in it: and that this work ought to be the employment of

our best and most vigorous days. Thus they may be quickened to redeem their time and work out their own falvation, before this painful, helpless period cometh upon them. Such afflictions show them how little wealth and honour can do, to ease the pains of the day, or secure the repose of the night. And, if they will receive instruction from such scenes, this is the important lesson they teach, that ' a man's life or happiness consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesfeth.' They may tend to make them habitually thankful for days of ease and activity, and nights of repose. By showing them how useless and helpless they may become, Gop instructs then: to behave in a humble, friendly and obliging manner; that when the days of forrow feize upon them, they may find others ready to pity and help them. The afflictions of aged persons give their descendants an opportunity of showing tenderness and humanity, and of requiting their parents: and they should lead all to remember, and behave to, ' them that fuffer adversity, as being themselves in the body;' liable

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to the same infirmities, and to want the same assistance. — To all which I may add, that the afflicted saint, may in the strongest way recommend Religion to others, by manifesting the good influence which its principles and motives have upon his heart. — Once more, God intends by these infirmities,

4. To confirm their hopes and excite their defires of a bleffed immortality.

They tend to confirm their hopes of it. The pains, weakness and incapacity of pious and benevolent men, for months and fometimes years together, are a confiderable proof of a future state. Creatures endowed with reason, formed in the image of Gop, and capable of glorifying him, feem to fuffer, in this respect, more than the brutes. This plainly intimates, that there is a future life, and that 'a rest remaineth to the people of God.' When it is confidered, how much of our time is necessarily spent in sleep; how little many of the best of men can do for God and their fellow-creatures, for a long time together, thro' mental or bodily weakness,

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weakness, we reasonably conclude, that there is another state of being: that the final reward of piety is not here; but that God hath fomething infinitely better in referve for his fervants. They are not shut up in eternal night without hope; but there is an everlafting day of light, ease, activity and joy, speedily to dawn upon them. — These afflictions tend likewise to direct their thoughts to a future state, and excite their desires of it. But Sickness, saith Mr. Pope, is a fort of grearly old age; it inspires us with the form ture state, and excite their defires of it. thoughts of a future state better than a as thousand volumes of philosophers and his divines.' It leads christians, with Job, to with long for that state, as a servant doth for heat the evening, and the hireling for his wabe ges. Even the hope of glory would fee hardly be fufficient to keep those desires with lively and active, if God was not to em-bitter earth to us. He taketh his people and off from fenfible things, and makes then and groan being burdened, that they may be and willing to be unclothed. We are too fone hei of these cottages of clay. God therefore takes away the pleasure of the day and are

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the repose of the night, that he may loofen our attachment to earth, and make us willing to go at his call. Yet the true christian doth not desire death, merely as a release from pain and weakness, but as it puts him into a capacity of ferving and enjoying God better than he can do here. It is worse than death to the zealous christian to be lifeless and useless, and he is ready to fay, with the pious Mr. Daniel Burgess, 'I had rather be idle under ground, than above ground.' He therefore looks with pleafure towards the grave, as the place in which he shall leave all his pains and infirmities: and he looks with faith and defire beyond it; to the heavenly world, where there shall never be a painful tiresome hour; but he shall ee God and ferve him day and night, without weariness, interruption or period. Thus doth God intend, by weakness and infirmity, to restrain an earthly spirit, nd bring men to ferious confideration and piety, - to exercise and strengthen heir graces, especially those which are so recessary and useful in the present state; amely, humility, patience, meekness and con-

contentment. - He intends by this whole. fome discipline, to make the sufferers useful to others; - and to confirm their hopes, and excite and cherish their desires, of eternal rest and glory. These blessed effects of their fufferings, Goo's fervants have often experienced: infomuch that one of the most holy and active of them, Dr. Rivet, faid 'He had learned more divinity in ten days' fickness than in fifty years study.' - Let me now add a few Reflections from the subject.

REFLECTIONS.

1. They, whose days are useful and their nights comfortable, have great reafon to be continually thankful.

This is the case of many, of most persons; and it demands their fervent gratitude to God. You have probably known the reverse of this, in times of bodily sickness or distress of mind. Call to remembrance, then, the former days and nights; that you may give glory to God, as the restorer and guardian of your health, whose mercies are new every mor-

ning, and may render unto him, according to the benefits conferred upon you. They have peculiar reason for thankfulness, on whose health and capacity for thought and labour, their families entirely depend for their support. What a dreadful addition would it be to the pain of unprofitable months, and the diftress of fleepless nights, to think of a beloved wife and children ready to perish, thro' your inability to labour! The Aged who have any comfortable days and nights will be very ungrateful, if they are insensible of the divine goodness, and if their expressions of complaint are more frequent and more hearty than their expressions of thankfulness. Let the persons, who are in health and vigour, 'whose sinews take rest in the night,' consider whether they have not deferved to be in the deplorable case of Job; whether they have not abused their health; lived in the forgetfulness of GoD; trifled away their time, and paid little attention to the one thing needful. Nay, who among us hath employed his health and strength for God fo diligently, as he should have done?

'It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not afflicted, pained, confumed; and because his compassions fail not.' Let us learn to be habitually thankful for a day of ease and activity, and a comfortable night. Let every morning and evening find us on our knees, devoutly adoring that beneficent Being, who 'causeth the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice.'

2. Let us learn, from this subject, to expect and prepare for, the days of affliction.

'If a man, faith Solomon, live many years and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.' Endeavour to be deeply convinced of the great uncertainty of health and ease. Be careful to improve them in the service of God, that you may have comfortable reflections upon it, when they are taken away from you. How many persons, in a full flow of health and spirits, have their months vanity, and their nights wearisome, by idleness, luxury, and the inordinate love of

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company and diversions. They spend their days, and many of their nights too, in rioting and gaming: inverting the order of nature and providence; sleeping away the precious hours of day-light; leaving little or no time for devotion, studying the word of Gop, and doing good in their stations! A sad preparation this, for afflictions and death! Gop doth not make them, but they make themselves, to possess fuch unprofitable time. O, think, ye giddy diffipated mortals, what your fickly afflicted friends would give for a tenth part of that health and vivacity, which you devote to vanity and fin, forgetful of your rational natures, and the eternal world, to which you are haftening. Awake, Sirs, and be wife. When you have health, leifure and chearfulness, use them for Gop and your fouls. Watch and pray. Be diligent to fecure an interest in Christ and the bleffings of his glorious gospel. Lay up a treasure of christian knowledge, experience and confolation, against the evil days come upon you: for you will then want it all. Be it your care to practife felf-

felf-denial, and be patient and calm under lighter evils; that you may not fink under the burdens of sickness and age, and have an uneafy confcience, bitter reflections on loft time, and a fearful looking for of vengeance, to add to thefe burdens. When the learned Grotius lay on his death-bed, an intimate friend defired, that, in his great wisdom, he would give him fome advice how he might fo live as to secure future happiness: to whom Grotius only faid, as I would fay to you, BE SERIOUS.' - Finally,

2. Let me exhort and comfort those, who are afflicted as 70b was.

Remember, my aged and fuffering friends, what the text intimates, that your afflictions are all appointed, and their degree and continuance exactly measured and determined by that Gop, in whose hand your breath is; and who, if you are chriftians indeed, is your God and Father in Christ Jesus. Remember that nothing befalls you but what is common to men; and that is a reason against complaining. Perhaps

haps some of you may read your fin in your punishment. You have been too eager about the world; and now God hath rendered you almost incapable of doing any thing. You have done little for God and religion, while you had ability; and now, in righteous judgment, he hath much leffened that ability. You have, perhaps, often excused your nonattendance on publick worship by some flight diforder; and now God hath fent fome great and painful one upon you. You would now fleep in the night, and cannot: perhaps you can recollect the time, at least the place, the house of God in particular, when you should have kept awake, and would not. But if there have been any things of this kind amis, I hope your consciences are now reproving you, and that your afflictions will lead you to repentance, and make your hearts better. - Let me address in comfortable words to God's aged and afflicted fervants. He giveth you fome intervals of health; at least ease: every day is not useless: every night is not wearisome. Let his name be G 2 praised

praised by you on this account. You may yet be useful, and should labour to be so. No Christian, who hath his understanding and speech, need be useless. You can yet pray to God for yourselves, your families and friends, and for the interest of religion. You can talk of GoD's wondrous works, and show forth his righteousness, truth and praise to your relations and acquaintance. You may be examples of patience, humility, contentment and thankfulness; and so, do honour to religion and good to others. And if you act thus, God will give you songs in the night; support you under your burdens; and communicate light and peace to your fouls, when the body is pained and the eyes kept waking. These infirmities remind you, that the day of your deliverance is at hand. Indeed, as that excellent divine, Dr. Evans, faid in his last fickness, which was very lingering and painful, 'The formality and ceremony of taking down this tabernacle by degrees, is irksome and grievous: how much better were it, if it pleased God, that it might movael of nontumble

tumble at once! But the will of Goo be done.' The happy period is nigh, when, if you are not able to fay with your last breath, as he did with his, 'All is well; all is well; you will affuredly find it to be for time and changes, grief and death will be all over, and one eternal day shine upon your souls. No weary hour, no fick moment, no degree of uneafiness shall be felt in Heaven; but the foul be all life and vigour in the fervice and enjoyment of God. 'There shall be no night there; no more death, neither forrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; but fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.' Believe these, Christians; for ' they are the true fayings of God.' I would not part with fuch hopes for the whole world. Let us comfort ourselves and one another with these words. God only knoweth how few years, or months, or days, may remain for us. Let it be our care to glorify him by active fervices or patient fufferings; by doing or bearing his will: to have our conversation in Heaven, and to wait all G 3 the

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the days of our appointed time till our change come.' And God grant, that all the afflictions of the present time, which are comparatively light and but for a moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!' Amen.



DISCOURSE VI.

God's Promise to bear and carry his aged Servants, considered.

Isaiah xlvi. 4.

And even to your old Age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.

IT is an important observation, 'That many promises of the Old Testament, which display the mercy of God to the Jewish nation, are cited in the New Testament as belonging to true christians, and applicable to them, whether they had been Jews or Gentiles: because the Jews were a figure of the true church of God; and the spiritual meaning of those promises is designed to be applied to all, who are the Israel of God, that is, truly pious G4 persons,

persons.' + For the same reason, we are justified in applying other promises for the comfort of true christians, when their state and circumstances are such, as to stand in need of the promised blessings, and to bender fuch promifes pertinent to their case. And indeed, without such a liberty of explaining and applying the promifes of the Old Testament to our own fouls, as the Apostles have taught us, for our private and spiritual advantage, a good part of the writings of the Prophets, even fome of those which refer to the days of the Messiah, will be impoverished, and drained of many of their richest bleffings. Whereas, there is a large and heavenly treasure of grace and bleffing contained in those exceeding great and precious promises, and transferred to the Gentile church under the New Testament. From these, true christians in all succeeding ages, as well as in the apostolic times, have found support and relief under their temptations and forrows. Upon these principles I dare apply the gracious promife in the text

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to aged faints; and would endeavour at this time to be a helper of their holiness and their joy.

The design of this chapter is to caution the Israelites against the idolatry of the Babylonians, and to prevent their fears of any mischief which idol-gods could do. In order to this, the Prophet describes the defolation that Cyrus should bring upon Babylon, and foretells that he should carry captive their gods, who would be infufficient to help, either their worshippers or themselves. And then God calls upon his people, in the text and following verse, to consider whether He was such a God as these. He reminds them of what He had already done for them in the formation of their state; and their support hitherto: that He had shown all the care and tenderness, of a parent to them; and would continue his favour even to the decline of their state, when, as the Prophet Hosea expresseth it, grey hairs were here and there upon them," that is, the evident fymptoms of decay and diffolution. It appears no way improbable, that the words may have a further refe-G 5 rence

rence to, and be particularly defigned to comfort God's aged fervants, who should live till near, or quite to, the end of the captivity; as we find by the book of Exra feveral did, whose eyes saw the ruin of the first, and the dedication of the second, temple. To comfort and animate their hearts, who expected to die in a ftrange land, and were greatly diffressed at the remembrance of Zian, God encourages them fill to hope in him, with an affurance, that He would be their refuge and strength in Babylon, as well as Judea. -. And even to your old Age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you. I shall endeavour to illustrate,

I. God's Promise to his aged Saints in the text.

II. The Reasons here suggested why they should confide in it: - and then shall add a few Reflections upon the whole. I am,

I. To open and illustrate God's Promife to his aged Saints in the text.

And

And here you will observe, that Goo's regard to them, and concern for them, is expressed in a variety of phrases, that they might have strong confolation. I will carry, bear, and deliver. It may not be easy to show the precise distinct meaning of each of these words. They intimate in general, that Gov will afford them fuch affiftances, as their circumstances require. More particularly, - that He will support them under all their burdens and difficulties; - comfort them under all their forrows and infirmities; - and finally, deliver them from all their fears and tribulations. - And if these thoughts, and the illustrations of them, should not be entirely diffinct, perhaps they may not be less edifying to those, for whose use they are principally intended.

1. God promiseth to support them under their burdens, and carry them thro' their difficulties.

I will carry you. The word fignifies, to fustain any pressure, or bear any burden. It intimates Gop's readiness to help them, when they feem likely to be overborne G 6 and

and preffed down. --- And how many are the burdens of old age from without! From the world, which still hangs too much about them. Sometimes, they are too fond of it, which is their fault. Sometimes their circumstances are such, that they cannot get rid of its cares and hurries, which is their misfortune. But as it is a trial appointed by Providence, they may expect to be carried thro' the difficulties that furround them, and be supported under the burdens that lie heavy upon them from this quarter. Their fellow-creatures are often a burden to them. Those with whom they are obliged to have dealings of various kinds, are apt to impose upon them, and take advantage of their decays to deceive them. Those in whom they place confidence, fometimes disappoint them; and some, from whom they have the highest reason to expect help and affiftance, forfake them, and prove unkind and ungrateful to them. This is the most grievous burden, and would be too heavy for them to bear, were it not that ' the eternal God is their refuge, and underneath them are his

" me

his everlasting arms. Nay, events, that in the vigour of life would have given them little concern, and fcarce have made any impression upon their minds, now hang as a heavy weight upon them; for the grass-hopper is a burden. Every little thing. is ready to overset them. But God will carry them, by supporting their spirits, and putting strength into them, fo that, they shall not faint and sink. When the lightest cares are ready to overwhelm them, and business, which requires little thought or application, is too much for them; inthis case the Lord JEHOVAH is their help, when they are not able to help themfelves; and as their day is, fo shall their strength be.

2. He will comfort them under all their infirmities and forrows.

I will bear, faith the Almighty. The word fornetimes fignifies, as the former did, to support and sustain; but more frequently, to exalt or elevate: and may denote lifting up the foul in joy and comfort; and fo it may be confidered, as an advance upon the former thought. So-

lomon,

homon, in a beautiful and emphatical manner, describes old Age, as the evil days, in which there is no pleasure. The fight decays, the limbs tremble, the appetite is gone, and wearifome days and nights are appointed to them. . Almost every aged person we see and converse with, is a comment upon his words. The infirmities of nature come upon them apace: the fenses grow weak: the active powers decay: they need the help of others, almost as much as in their infancy. And fuch is the union of the foul and body, fuch the dependance of the mind upon the animal frame, that the spirit suffers by the flesh, and oftentimes the faculties of the foul languish, as the bodily powers do. Their relish for company, business, and pleafure, is gone. But that is not the worst infirmity: for they find their thoughts confused; their affection to divine things flags, and they cannot ferve God with fuch fixedness of heart, fuch warmth of zeal and love, as they have done. What they hear and read quickly flips away; and their minds are not fo easily impressed with divine truths, as they have formerly S. 6.

formerly been. In these melancholy circumstances, Goo will bear and lift up their fouls. He fometimes, in a wonderful manner, strengthens the powers of the mind, when the body is in the most languishing state; and they enjoy the light of his countenance, when nature is most decayed. Or, if they have not fensible manifestations of his favour and love, they find, what is perhaps a furer ground of hope, their purposes for God and his ways more fixed, their graces vigorous, and their evidences for heaven clear. Under the infirmities of nature, He will afford them the confolations of religion; elevate their minds above the world, and all its low cares and concerns; raife them above the trifles of earth and fenfe: strengthen their faith in his promises, and enlighten the eyes of their understandings, to fee the rich and glorious inheritance of the Saints, and their own title to it, and qualification for it. He will make their chambers of confinement and affliction comfortable, and give them foretaftes of the glory to be revealed. In a word, they

will find, as St. Paul did, ' that tho' their

- 3. God will deliver them out of all their fears and tribulations.
- Even I will carry, and will deliver you.' Many are the troubles they feel: many are those they fear. But the righteous crieth and the Lord heareth him, and delivereth him out of all his afflictions.' Many of God's aged fervants, thro' the languor of their spirits or weakness of their faith, are continually diftreffed with anxious fears of poverty and contempt, of afflictions increasing upon them: left they should want before they die; leave their families in distress, or, which affects them more, left their descendants should behave so, as to bring down their gray hairs with forrow to the grave. But the Lord will deliver them from all their fears, and strengthen their hearts. -They are liable to many temptations; and Satan takes advantage of their infirmities to buffet and affright them. When they read of Lot, and Solomon, and others, who after

after a long course of steady piety, forfook God, or did evil in their old age, it terrifies them, left they also should prove apostates; or, after a long profesfion of religion, cause the good ways of . God to be blasphemed. In this instance He will deliver them; for as St. Paul observeth, 'God is faithful, who will not fuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape + Thro' fear of death, fome of them are all their life-time subject to bondage. But Gop who knows their hearts, will dispel their doubts and fears, and make them, with the Apostle, defire to depart and be with Christ. - At length He will give them complete delit verance; an everlasting release from every thing that is painful and diffressing. He, will carry them on Angels' wings to the heavenly mansions, and put them in posfession of that rest which remaineth to the people of Gon. Thus have I endea; voured to unfold this delightful promife; and shown you, that God here engageth to support his aged servants under their burdens,

dens, - yea, to comfort their hearts under all their forrows and infirmities, - and at length to deliver them from all their fears and tribulations. I proceed,

II. To confider the Reasons suggested in the text, why they should confide in this promise.

And I hope you will observe them, and attend to the force of them. --- He is your Maker, - He hath been careful of you hitherto, - and He is an unchangeable Gop.

1. He is your Maker.

I have made, faith He, and I will bear. This is a truth you will readily affent to, that God made you; formed your bodies and fouls. Now, why did He make you, but to communicate happiness to you, that you might ferve him on earth, and be for ever with him? He then, who freely gave you life, will of his mercy grant you every needful good. He will have a regard to the work of his own hands, and not forfake it. It is observable that when God is reproving his people for being afraid afraid of man, He thus expostulates with them, ' Why forgettest thou the Lord thy Maker?' + - Gop made you: must He not therefore be a very wife Being? Must He not exactly know the state both of the inward and the outward man? be intimately acquainted with all your infirmities and imperfections, both of body and mind? Must He not see the dangers to which you are liable in many circumstances, in which you cannot see them yourselves? Must He not know all your distresses and fears? And hath not so wife a Being an access to your minds, and cannot He strengthen, support, and comfort them? Can He ever be at a loss for means to deliver his people? No: be affured of this, that the Lord who gave you your being, 'knows how to deliver the godly out of their tribulations; and counter-work all the defigns of men or devils against them. - God made you: must He not therefore be a very powerful Being? And can any thing be too hard for him? Is any evil fo great, from which He cannot deliver you? Is any good

good so valuable and important, that He cannot confer upon you? Surely He, who raised this mortal frame from common dust, can, with infinite ease, strengthen it; remove its disorders; or make the spirits chearful, and cause your consolations to abound, as your tribulations do. 'Trust in the Lord for ever, the Lord your Maker, who is of great power, whose understanding is infinite, and in whom is everlasting strength.' Another argument is,

2. He hath been careful of you and kind to you hitherto.

This is intimated in the text; which is a promise of continued care and favour; and it is plainly expressed in the preceding verse, 'Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb.' God urgeth this as a reason, why his servants should trust his promises, and still depend upon Him. It is He, as David gratefully acknowledges, 'who took you out of the womb, made you to hope when you were upon your mother's breast.' + 'I was cast

upon thee from the womb, faith he, thou art my God, from my mother's belly.' He hath been the guide of your youth; car-ried you in the arms of his power; cherished you in the bosom of his love; in fix and in feven troubles preferved you; supported you under a multitude of evils, any one of which had overwhelmed you, if He had not been your help. He hath often defended you, even against yourfelves; against the natural consequences of your own inconfideration and rashness. Have you not reason to acknowledge, with the aged patriarch Jacob, that the Gop of your fathers has fed you all your life long to this day, and redeemed you from evil? + Now, what stronger argument can there be, to encourage your faith in his promifes, than your long experience of his goodness and care; and recollecting all the way the Lord hath led you thro' the wilderness? To distrust him, will be peculiarly unreasonable, and highly un-grateful; as if in the long course of your lives, you had been independant and felffufficient creatures, or the mercies of God were

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[†] Pfalm lxxi. 17, 20.

3. He is an unchangeable Gon.

This feems to be intimated in that phrase, to your old age I am HE. An expressive word, which is elsewhere rendered the same. Thou art the same. + 'I am He, that I was of old, to the faints in former generations, and shall continue the fame thro' every fucceeding age, and not like the idols of the heathen, that were made yesterday, and are destroyed tomorrow.' This proves that God is the proper object of our trust and confidence. He is ' the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning. I am the Lord, fays he, I change not, therefore the fons of Jacob are not confumed.' He hath been the dwellingplace of his people in all generations. Your fathers trusted in him; and you have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you, what great things He did for them, and in the old time before them. Creatures change; but He is the farre. When men grow old, they often find that their friends forfake them; their

their old acquaintance look shy on them: their children fometimes turn their backs upon them; the world is almost weary of them, and wisheth them gone. But their God is the same powerful, wife and gracious Being, that He ever was. 'His arm is not shortened, that He cannot fave; nor his ear heavy, that He cannot hear;' nor doth his affection for his aged fervants leffen. It was a remarkable faying of Cardinal Wolsey, at the close of · his life; ' If I had ferved my God, as long and as faithfully as I have ferved my prince, He would not have cast me off in my old age.' Thro' all fucceeding generations the Lord shall endure. This adds the strongest security to his promises and covenant; and is an encouragement to his people to hope in Him, whatever changes and alterations there may be in the world about them; for 'his covenant will He not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.' In this, therefore, you may rejoice, as the Pfalmist doth, 'this God is our God, for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death.'

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death'. These are the reasons suggested in the text, why the aged servants of Gop should confide in his almighty and gracious care. He is their Maker, -He hath been their supporter and benefactor hitherto, - And He is an unchangeable Gop. Let me now add fome Reflections from the fubject.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How unreasonable and unbecoming is it for aged Saints to fink under their burdens and infirmities!

Be they ever fo many and great, you have the promise of God to depend upon, that He will bear, and carry, and deliver you. It is too common a case for Christ's old disciples to grow forrowful and dejected, and spend the conclusion of their lives in fretfulness and complaining; which renders them uneafy to themselves, doubles all their croffes, destroys all their comforts, and makes them burdensome to those about them. But this is a very unreasonable and unbecoming disposition; very dishonourable to God, whose good-H

ness you have so long and largely tasted: It is very injurious to religion, of which you ought to be patrons and ornaments, and likely to prejudice others against it, as if, after a long trial, you had found it to be an uncomfortable, melancholy fervice. Suffer me to expostulate with you, Fathers, on this head, and to ask you, as Eliphaz did Job, ' Are the confolations of God small with thee?' + Do all his good and comfortable words carry no meaning in them? Doth He intend to deceive his creatures, and even his children? Check, then, the first appearance of a complaining spirit: labour to keep up your courage, and maintain your chearfulness. In order to this, have faith in God and his promises, especially that precious one, which we have been contemplating. Plead it before Gop, and commit the keeping of your fouls and the disposal of all your inferior concerns to him, as a faithful Creator. When your heart is ready to be overwhelmed, and doubts and fears to get the better of your faith, recollect David's observation, 'I faid this

this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high.' + Recollect the long experience you have had of Gop's care and kindness: and imitate Abraham, who, when a hundred years old, was strong in faith, and staggered not at the promise of God thro' unbelief. 'Fear not, for He will be with you; be not difmayed, for He is your God; He will strengthen you, yea, He will help you, yea, He will uphold you with the right hand of his righteoufness.' 1 And may his spirit help your infirmities, and strengthen your faith; and then you will find his promifes your joy and fong amidst your pilgrimage, and a cordial to support you, when flesh and heart faileth. In this circumstance I heartily wish your souls and mine may be in the same frame, as that of a pious Scotch minister, who, being asked by a friend during his last illness, whether he thought himself dying; answered, 'Really, friend, I care not whether I am or not; for if I die, I shall be with God, and if I live, He will be with me.'

H 2 2. Aged

+ Pfalm lxxvii. 10. 1 Ifa. xli. 10.

2. Aged Saints are under great obligations to God, and should be faithful unto death.

You are under innumerable obligations to God, as your creator, preferver, and benefactor; as the guide of your youth, and the stay of your advancing years. You are under the highest obligations to him for Christ and the promises; for all the operations of his grace upon your hearts, and all the displays of his love, faithfulness and immutability. What then doth the Lord require of you, but that you hold fast that which you have, and go on to perfection? If you expect these fupports and confolations, proceed vigoroufly in the fervice of GoD; and let not your infirmities be made an excuse for negligence and floth. It is your duty to bring forth fruit in old age. Labour to maintain the feriousness and spirituality of your devotions, tho' your thoughts may not be fo regular, nor your affections fo lively, as they have been. Let your hoary heads never be fpotted with any fin, but found in the way of righteousness; and

then they will be crowns of glory to you. Consider what you can do for the honour of God, and the interest of religion: how you can show your gratitude to God, and your love to the Lord Jesus Christ. If God giveth you strength and ability for active fervices, abound in them; for death is at hand. If you cannot glorify him by active fervices, labour to adorn and recommend religion, by patience and refignation to his will, and by quietly waiting for his falvation. Show to the rifing generation the knowledge of God, his wonderful works for you, for your fathers, for his church; and be teachers of good things; that you may leave a favour of religion, whenever you quit the stage. Thus, Fathers, should your last days be employed, and then you will be useful even to the close of life. Thus will you finish your race with honour and joy, and, thro' the riches of divine grace, receive a diftinguished reward from the God, whom you have faithfully ferved.

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3. Young

3. Young persons should chuse Gon, as the guide of their youth, if they defire that He should be the support and comfort of their age.

To you, who are young, our text speaks; and if you defire to have God for your friend and helper, amidst the temptations and forrows of life, the decays of nature, and the attacks of death, you must fecure an interest in him now, by repentance and faith in the Redeemer; by devoting yourselves to his service, and fpending your days in his fear. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before those evil days come, in which there is no pleasure; no earthly pleasure: nothing but the pleasure of a good conscience, of reviewing a life spent in ferving God, and chearful hope of approaching happiness. This will be the stay and staff of old age, and delight the foul, when nothing else can. - If you desire this, let habits of serious, lively devotion be contracted while young: a flock of religious qualities and dispositions laid up in the mind, that may be improved

improved and strengthen as long as you live. - But if you spend your youth in vanity and fin, in frolick and trifles, without habituating yourselves to devotion, felf-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, what a miferable old age will you have of it! ' If the former part of your life hath been vanity, the latter end of it can be nothing but vexation of spirit.' The mind will be craving and reftless: it can neither look backward nor forward with pleafure, but will be full of uneafiness, spleen and remorfe; diffatisfied with itself, and out of humour with every thing elfe. Gop will ' write bitter things against you, and make you to possess the iniquities of your youth.' Believe it, young friends, old age is a burden heavy enough of itself, without the stings of a guilty conscience, the reflection of having ferved divers lufts and pleasures, and the want of some pious, faithful, tender friends to lighten the burden. It will be fad indeed to have none to converse with in those circumstances, but God and your own conscience. and neither of them at peace with you. - If you neglect religion now, habits H 4 of

of vice will be fo fixed in the foul, that it will be very difficult, next to impossible, to root them out. Old age is a feafon of life, ' not very apt to learn, and much less apt to unlearn.' Besides, is there not considerable reason to doubt, whether God will accept the dregs of your life, when the prime and vigour of it have been with-held from him; yea, employed to affront him? - If you are ever fo ferious and good, when you grow old, you can do comparatively little for God in those days of weakness and affliction. I remember to have read of an old man, who, being converted in the decline of life, ordered this to be inscribed on his tomb-stone, 'Here lies an old man of feven years of age.' So many years he had been religious: and he reckoned that he had lived no longer, than he had lived religiously: and indeed, living in pleafure, or for worldly ends, is not living; it is rather death. - I speak, you see, upon the prefumption of your living to be old; but can you depend on that, when ' you know not what shall be on the morrow? All flesh is grass. All the glory

glory of man,' health, strength, beauty, all fade. It is vain to talk of what you will do, and how good you will be, when you are old; since this night your souls may be required of you. Make haste then, and delay not to keep God's commandments. I conclude all with that solemn exhortation of Solomon, which suits persons of every age, 'Whatsoever thy hand sindeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. +

+ Eccl. ix. 10.



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DISCOURSE VII.

Israel's Journey thro' the Wilderness, an Emblem of the Christian's State on Earth.

NUMBERS X. 12.

And the children of Israel took their journies out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

HE Apostle Paul observes, 'That the things, which happened to Ifrael in the wilderness, happened to them for enfamples, or types and patterns to us; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' + The facred writers fometimes allude to their case; refer to their deliverance from Egypt, as an emblem of the christian's deliverance from the slavery of

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fin and Satan; and their entrance upon Canaan, as an emblem of the heavenly state, which all the people of God shall posses. So that I think, my brethren, I am sufficiently justified in considering their journies and stations in the wilderness, as an emblem of the state of God's people, while they are passing thro' this world. This will give us a very natural and instructive idea of human life, and some important hints of caution and encouragement, particularly adapted to the circumstances of aged christians.

After God had delivered Israel from Egypt, he appointed them to wander forty years in the wilderness; that he might punish their disobedience, cure them of the idolatry which they had been insected with in Egypt, give them time to learn the laws and ceremonies which He had enjoined them, and train them up, by subjection and discipline, for driving out the wicked Canaanites, whose land they were to possess. They had continued long near mount Sinai, where the law was given; and the text tells us, that 'they took their journies out of the wilderness

H 6

of Sinai, and the cloud, which directed their march, rested in the wilderness of Paran,' where they were to encamp. This wilderness of Paran was a vast defart: it was eleven days journey over; and most of their stations, tho' called by particular names, were in that wilderness, + So that we may naturally confider their state during this period, as an emblem of the christian's state while on earth. The subject of our discourse, therefore, will be this Reflection, that

While we are in this world we are paffing thro' a wilderness; and our removes in it are only from one wilderness to another.

The christian is travelling from Egypt, from spiritual slavery, to the heavenly Canaan, and all his journey is thro' a wilderness. The men of this world will object to, and diflike, the comparison, because the world is their portion, their all. But those, whose chief business and governing defire is to get to heaven, and who have their conversation there, will acknow-

⁺ Numb. xii. 16.

acknowledge the emblem to be just, will dwell on it with pleasure, and derive instruction from it. The justice of this resection will appear from seriously considering, that the present state is to the true christian, on many accounts, an uncomfortable,—a dangerous,—and an unsettled state.—This world is like a wilderness, as,

1. It is an uncomfortable state.

The wilderness was so to Israel, both on account of the inconveniencies they met with in it, and the goodness of the country to which they were going, and where they defired and longed to be. The wilderness of Paran was a dry, fandy defart. It is called in scripture, ' A terrible wilderness, a land of defarts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, a land that no man paffed thro', and where no man dwelt.' + And travellers give us the same account of it. - Such is earth to the people of God. Their state here is represented in scripture as a pilgrimage; they are strangers and soiourners

journers on earth: few and evil are the days of their pilgrimage; yea, they are full of trouble. The temptations which furround them; the body of death which cleaves to them; fin and corruption that still dwell in them, are their greatest burdens, and make their journey toilfome. Afflictions and troubles of various kinds, too many to be reckoned up, are a painful exercise, from which they are seldom free. Bodily disorders hinder them from active fervice and comfortable enjoyment. Their disappointed hopes and expectations diffress their minds, and spoil their pleasure. The want of earthly enjoyments is their uneafiness, and oftentimes their reproach: and if they have much of the world, it is fo far from making them happy, that it encreases their cares and anxieties. - They have many vexations from their fellow-travellers; from those of the fame tribe; and fometimes from those of the same tent and family. They would be ferviceable to others; but either have it not in their power, or others will not permit or receive their friendly attempts; and they often meet with base and

and ungrateful returns for real services.

The darkness of their own minds, to which it is owing that they know fo little of God, of Christ, of themselves, of religion and a future state, is a grievance to them; and the imperfection of their own graces giveth them many forrows of heart. - They have various comforts indeed; but thefe have all fome alloy or mixture. And the nobleft pleafures they find on earth are not the natural growth of the foil; nor will any cultivation of art produce them: they are fent down immediately from heaven, as the manna was upon the Israelites; or drawn out of unlikely objects, by the providence or grace of God, as the water was fetched out of the rock for Israel. Thro' fuch a wilderness they are travelling, where painful circumstances are every day occurring. In this wilderness their carcasses must fall; for they are under the general fentence of mortality; and there is no hope that their case will be much better, till they are quite past it. — This world is like a wilderness, for,

2. It is a dangerous state.

Dangerous to the Christian's virtue and peace, to the life and health of his foul, which are the main things that he regards and purfues. Ifrael found the wilderness of Paran dangerous, as well as uncomfortable; not only destitute of all suitable fupplies, but befet with enemies. It is called, ' a waste howling wilderness,' + referring to the many ravenous beafts, that prowled about it with hideous howlings, and often destroyed the helpless travellers. It is also called, 'a great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions; 't and by these many of the Israelites were destroyed. They also met with some formidable human enemies; as Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan; and were destroyed by some of the allurements of Balaam and Balak. - In this respect, it is a lively emblem of the case of the Christian while on earth. His virtue is in continual danger from many quarters. - His own appetites and passions often lead him into fin. The

[†] Deut. xxxii. 10. ‡ Deut. viii. 15.

The pleasures of the wilderness, imperfect as they are, tend to seduce him from God and his duty; being fuited to the lower part of his nature, and strongly recommended by the language and practice of others. - He feldom goeth into company, but he is in some peril from it. He is in danger of being infected by the bad examples, customs and manners of the age; which fashion sanctifies and enforces, against the authority and law of GoD. The allurements of the world are much more dangerous than its terrors; as Ifrael fuffered more by Balaam's curfed advice to corrupt their principles and morals, than they could have done by Balak's hoftile attack. In this wilderness there are many beafts of prey in human shape, who labour to corrupt innocence, and are glad to fully any worthy character. -But the Christian hath not only flesh and blood to contend with, but principalities and powers. Satan, the old deceiver, watcheth to gain advantage over him: now he lies in wait like a scorpion, that he may bite him unawares; now he goeth about like a roaring lion, feeking whom

he may devour and swallow up at once. Yea, he sometimes sinds enemies among his friends, even in his own houshold, who would persuade him that he is too strict and scrupulous, or too active; and so would weaken his strength, lessen his zeal, and beguile him of his reward. He may feel the truth of an observation of Dr. Lucas; 'It is not seldom seen, that the friends of our bosom are the greatest enemies of our souls.' In short, his whole life is a state of warfare; he must carry on the combat against numerous enemies thro' life, and endure to the end. Once more,

3. It is an unfettled flate; subject to continual changes and alterations.

Israel removed from the wilderness of Sinai to the wilderness of Paran. Tho's they journeyed from place to place, still it was in the wilderness. Thus all our removes and changes, tho' we expect they will be for the better, are only from one wilderness to another. This may be illustrated by observing,—that we move from one age to another,—from one place

to another, — from one condition to another; but still it is in a wilderness, and care and trouble will attend us in every remove.

We are moving from one age to another;

And each is a wilderness. 'Childhood and youth are vanity,' generally spent in that which is infignificant and unprofitable; and there are few circumstances in that period, which give us pleafure in the reflection. When we properly enter upon life, cares and anxieties feize upon us; and we eagerly engage in some pursuits, which in riper years we fee to have been foolish. We promise ourselves much from the next stage: that we shall have got into a good track of business; that our work will be eafy and our fuccess fure; and that this, with the pleasure of encreasing connections and a growing family, will overbalance our cares. But we find that we have only got further into the wilderness; and sometimes say, 'the former days were better than these.' We then please ourselves with hope that we shall enjoy repose

repose in the advance of life, and that those who have been long our care, will comfort us after all our toil and labour. But some circumstance or other often arifeth to destroy or lessen the comfort we expected. Perhaps the capacity for relishing what we have gained is almost gone, and our former activity and vivacity are loft. Then come on the evil days, in which we fay, there is no pleafure. The road becomes more burdenfome than ever, so that we can hardly drag the poor remains of life along it; and the Aged, with all their infirmities, have fometimes the mortification to fee their youngers weary of them. Every age hath its peculiar cares and burdens, and, as Moses saith of Israel in the wilderness, 'we spend our years as a tale that is told.' + Further,

We are fometimes moving from one place to another.

There are few persons but have in the course of their lives, been removed from one town and settlement to another.

Some-

† Pfalm xc. 9.

Sometimes the providence of God directs us to change our place, as the cloud pointed out the motions and stations of the camp of Ifrael. We are naturally fond of the place of our birth, or the place where we have fpent our youth, or been for any time fixed: use hath reconciled us to the inconveniencies of it, and even turned some of them into pleasures. Old acquaintance and connections are agreeable; and we are ready to fay with Fob, 'I shall die in my nest;' and expect to be buried among our own people. But providence moves us to fome diftant settlement. - Perhaps disappointment in our business and schemes obligeth us to feek another sphere of action, by which our youthful intimacies are broken off. Or, if we continue on the fame fpot, our friends are removed; and whole families, that we loved, and with whom we took fweet counsel together, are fcattered.—
It fometimes happens, that persons are fcarcely fixed in a new station, and got over the difficulty and trouble of a remove, but a route, as it is called, comes; an order from heaven, and they must march march away to another place. Some unforeseen, unexpected inconveniencies spring up, where we intended to fix for life, and oblige us to think of another station. Perhaps providence leadeth us into trouble, because we are too secure in our peace, and not fufficiently thankful for it. -Some persons, after they have been long hurried and vexed with worldly cares and perplexities, get to a more folitary station, and hope to spend the rest of their days in quiet: and then they are forced back again into the hurries of the world. There are many who quit their place and calling without need, and go contrary to the plainest intimations of providence; they are never easy long in any place; never long pleafed with any business or connections: thus they multiply their own troubles. There are different cares and forrows in different places; but cares and forrows are the growth of every place; for every place is a wilderness. Men fly from serpents, and get among scorpions; and change a fandy defart for a marshy one. So that we may acknowledge the justice of that faying faying of an Ancient, 'Where-ever thou goeft, croffes will follow thee; for whereever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee.' Further,

We are changing from one condition to another.

The state of our affairs, our bodies and our connections, is continually changing. -Men's worldly circumstances rise and fall: they are brought low; they are exalted; they go out full, and return empty, and then the world fmiles upon them again. But riches are oftentimes as troublesome as poverty, and bring more temptations, cares and vexations with them. We expect perhaps to be easy and happy in some new habitation; and after much pains and expence to make it handsome and convenient, we find that no walls will keep out trouble, and no ornaments fecure perpetual ease and quiet of mind. - Health and fickness, as well as prosperity and adversity, are set one over against the other. We fometimes groan under acute pain, or languish with pining sickness. When health and eafe are restored, some new disorder

diforder foon attacks us; or, if we continue vigorous and chearful for a long time together, we begin to fee that there is fome truth in the poet's words, that ' Health for want of change becomes disease.'-We enter on new relations in life, and promise ourselves much from them; but still it is a wilderness: if we have new pleasures, we have new cares and forrows; and if we double our joys, we double our griefs too. - In every stage of the wilderness, we leave some of our relations and friends behind us, the prey of the great and universal destroyer, Death, and find the rest of the journey more tirefome and dangerous, for want of their affiftance and company. - Some are confined long in the wilderness, beyond the usual period of human life. Sometimes they think themselves near the country, for which they are bound; and then, like Ifrael, they are turned back again, and have many more years to wander. Their burdens grow heavier, and their pleafures less; and nothing in the wilderness can fupport them: nothing but religion, and the hope of getting to Canaan at last. This,

This, my brethren, is the state of mankind, even of good men; yea, the best of men, with regard to many of these things, fare as others do; as Moses and Aaron fuffered with their rebellious brethren. Those who are got but a little way into the wilderness, may think the representation strained. They have my best wishes, that they may find it fo; and that their journey may be as pleafant, as is confiftent with their end being peace. But I believe the experience of most persons, especially of the Aged, confirms what I have been faying. And I heartily pray that it may dispose us to receive those useful instructions, which this idea of human life fuggefts, and which it is my business now to recommend to you.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us be thankful, that we have fo many comforts in the wilderness.

Far be it from me to suggest, that it is all gloomy and dreary. The wilderness was not so to Israel. They met with many pleasant spots; some palm trees and wells of water. + They had Moses and

Aaron

Aaron with them; were well guided and guarded, and fed and clothed. Their posterity were often reminded of God's favours to their Fathers there, and thankfully acknowledged them. So, at a folemn fast kept in Nehemiah's time, the Levites acknowledged, 'Thou in thy manifold mercies, forfookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go: yea, forty years didst thou fustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing.' + - And this, bleffed be God, is our cafe. He giveth us bread to eat, and raiment to put on. We are not indeed fed and clothed by miracle, yet we are by Providence; and this thought is to a pious mind very delightful. God crowneth the year with his goodness. Our connections with one another are a fource of daily pleasure. Our compassionate feelings, social affections and meetings, and friendly offices, take off the burdensomeness of the way. We have,

as it were, Moses with us, as a law-giver and governour: we are not exposed to favage, arbitrary power, but have our liberties fenced about with good laws. We have Gon's word to be our guide and our comfort. We have the heavenly manna; that bread from heaven, of which, whosoever eateth, will not only enjoy prefent nourishment and delight, but live for ever. The Israelites drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ, typical of the spiritual blessings he bestows on his people, to refresh them in their travels thro' the wilderness. God gives us also, as he did to them in the wilderness, ' his good spirit to instruct us.' + We have Aaron with us; the Lord's priefts and ministers to prefide over our religious affemblies. We have days of holy rest and solemn feasts, and various exercises and ordinances to strengthen and revive our hearts; and 'with joy we may draw water out of these wells of salvation." Hitherto hath the Lord borne us up in the wilderness: and it becomes us to remember all the way he hath led us, that

we may be thankful unto him and bless his name. 'Let the wilderness lift up its voice, and the inhabitants thereof give glory unto the Lord.' +

2. Let us be patient and contented under the evils of it.

And for this plain reason, because it is fin that hath turned the world into a wilderness. Why was Israel condemned to wander in the great and terrible wilderness, but because they were a perverse and rebellious people, who tempted and provoked the most high? Sin hath spoiled the beauty, and blafted the glory of the creation. Amidst all our sufferings, we are only feeling the natural confequences or just punishment of fin; and this wilderness is much more comfortable than our iniquities deserve. - Let us farther consider, that some of the evils of it are wifely and kindly allotted to us, to prevent our being too fond of it, and feeking rest and happiness in it, short of Canaan: and we read God's merciful intention towards us, in what was faid to Israel: ' He led thee thro' the great and terrible

terrible wilderness, that he might humble thee and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; '+ to discipline and train thee for a happy fettlement in the heavenly country. Let us then expect trouble; never raise our expectations too high from, nor be too fond of, any place, habitation, circumstance or connection; for the more we expect from the world, the more shall we be disappointed. This caution is especially necessary for Youth. Let us never look for a complete or a durable happiness here. When troubles come, let us guard our hearts, that they be not impatient and rebellious against Gop. It was monstrous conduct in Israel, 'to provoke the most High in the wilderness,' where they were fuffering for their fins. 'Neither murmur ye, as fome of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.' To prevent this, think of the goodness and mercy, that follows you in every stage and circumstance. And especially look unto Jesus, who spent so many years in this wilderness; and, having left his original glory, and being perfectly 1-3 holy

+ Deut. viii. 16.

holy, felt more from its inconveniencies, than we can do. He hath traversed the defart before you, and left behind the print of his feet. In the way in which Christ hath gone, never complain; and if the path be rough, confider your forerunner. Do not be impatient because the journey is long and tedious. Remember what the Pfalmist faith, of Ifrael's march thro' the wilderness; 'He led them forth by the right way.' + Tho' it was roundabout and uncomfortable, it was still the right way. God always leads his people the right way; the best way to their heavenly habitation, tho' it may not feem to them the nearest and the most comfortable: and therefore, inflead of murmuring, they ought to go on their way rejoicing.'

3. Let us earnestly seek and hope for the presence of God with us in this wilderness; and that will be every thing to us.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel, that 'to them pertained the glory; '‡ the shining cloud, that was a symbol or emblem

⁺ Pfalm cvii. 7. ‡ Rom. ix. 4.

emblem of the divine presence with them: this went before them in their journies and rested, as the text tells us, in the wilderness of Paran. This cloud attended them by day to direct their motions, skreening them from the heat of the sun in those fandy lands: and it appeared as a pillar of fire by night, to cast a light and warmth about them; and it might also terrify and keep off wild beafts. We are not to expect any fuch fensible manifestations of the divine presence with us: but we have many gracious promifes, that God will guide and defend his people; that ' if in all our ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our paths; that he will order the steps of good men; that they shall be led by his Spirit; that he will be a fun and shield to them.' And it is observable, that these promises are often made in figurative expressions, taken from the cloud of glory in the wilderness; particularly Isaiah faith, 'The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Sion, and upon her affemblies, a cloud and a smoak by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall I 4 be

be a defence.' + Let us therefore daily ask his presence, guidance and defence; commit ourselves to his care, and follow the leadings of his providence: for nothing can be more comfortable than to fee God, as it were, going before us in our affairs and fettlements, and especially our important changes in life. Let us look to him to guard us from every enemy; especially from the fiery serpent, that would poison and destroy our souls. His help is to be obtained by living near to him, in the exercise of faith and devotion. And if we have the light of his countenance with us, it will make ' the wilderness like Eden, and the defart like the garden of the Lord.'

- 4. Let us rejoice in the views of the heavenly Canaan, and diligently prepare for it.
- We, faith the Apostle, who have believed, do enter into rest; for to us the good tidings of rest are preached, as well as to them, even a rest that remaineth to the people of Gop.' † We are now in

in the wilderness: but there is a better country, even a heavenly one, before us, to which we are travelling. — This is uncomfortable; but there is no want, no inconvenience, no fin, no forrow there. -This is dangerous; but no enemy shall come near that facred abode: Satan and wicked men are for ever banished from it; no more to tempt or terrify the people of God. - This is unsettled; but there his Israel find a settled rest, and shall be made 'pillars in the house of Goo, to go out no more.' That state is subject to no changes, but from better to better; from one degree of happiness to another. - Let us be thankful, my brethren, that fuch a rest, and such a state, is revealed and promifed to us: that we are not to live always; not to wander endlessly in this wilderness. We may, by reading the word and mixing faith with it, view the good land, which Gop intends for our everlasting portion; and see something of the length and breadth, the business and felicity of it. But let us, as the Apostle exhorts, ' fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any

any of us should come short of it.' Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of un-belief, as the *Israelites*. With many of them God was displeased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness, and never entered Canaan. 19 Wherefore, let him, that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.' Let us not lust after evil things, as they lusted; nor be covetous and eager in our defires of earthly enjoyments; for God may, as in their case, ' grant our request, and fend leanness into our fouls.'+ Let us not idolize this world; nor indulge any criminal passions; nor tempt Christ, lest we be destroyed, as they were. Let our conversation be in heaven: and let the believing views of it reconcile us to this wearisome pilgrimage, and comfort us under all our forrows. A few stages more, and we shall make a final remove to the heavenly land, of which it may be faid, more truly than of Canaan, that it is the glory of all lands. 1 - Indeed Fordan is in the way; death's cold flood divideth this good land from the wilderness. But

⁺ Pfalm cvi. 15.

that God, who hath led us hitherto, and is our Gop for eyer, will be our guide unto death, and thro' it, and make our passage safe and comfortable. And when we are once got thro, it, all forrows, dan-gers and fears, are for ever over. All our wants will be supplied, and all our defires and hopes infinitely, exceeded. There we shall see reason to acknowledge, as a holy man did, just before he expired, that . He believed he could not have gone to heaven, without every affliction which he had endured.' Come on, then, my fellow-pilgrims, and let not 'our fouls, like Ifrael's, be discouraged because of the way; '+ but ' give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: to him who leadeth his people thro' the wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever. † Amen.

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† Num. xxi. 4. † Pfalm cxxxvi. 1, 16.

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DISCOURSE VIII.

The inward Man renewed, amidst the Decays of the outward Man.

2 Corinthians, iv. 16.

For which cause we faint not, but tho' our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

ST. Paul frequently represents his own fufferings, as intended for the benefit of the christian church; and in this view his benevolent heart rejoiced in them. Accordingly, having in this chapter given the Corinthians an account of the troubles and afflictions he endured, he adds, in the verse before the text, 'All things are for your sakes.' It supported his mind under all his distresses, to think, that they were intended for the honour of Christianity, and for the encouragement of his fellow-christians under their sufferings. And his expecta-

expectation of their fubserving these important purposes, was abundantly answered. Not only his cotemporaries, but the christian church in all succeeding ages, have received much benefit by them: yea the history he gives of the temper of his mind under them, and the advantages which he gained by them, is a standing lesson to us. It teaches us to aspire after the fame temper, and, in fo doing, to hope for the fame comfort and advantage by the afflictions which are allotted to us. Our text is in this view particularly instructive; instructive to all, especially to aged christians, and those who are labouring under bodily pains and infirmi-ties. For the illustration of the words, and stating the Apostle's temper, let me confider and recommend to your regard.

I. The view here given of human nature, as confifting of an outward and inward man.

II. The manner in which each part of it was affected: the one perishing; the other strengthening, instead of fainting.

III. The ground of the Apostle's happy experience on this head, ' for which cause we faint not.' — I am to consider,

I. The view here given of human na-Thus it is taid as year '

It consists of an outward and an inward man. An elegant and useful description, on which account I chuse just to mention it. In strict propriety of speech, both these together constitute the man: but the Apostle distinguisheth between them, in order more clearly to describe what he experienced: and it would be well for us, if we were more careful to diftinguish between them in our fentiments and conduct. By our outward man, or, as fome would render the original, ' the man that is without us,' he means the body, with its feveral parts, limbs and fenses, composed of matter, and capable of being divided and destroyed. This is the covering of the foul; the house or tent in which it dwells. And the expression, may intimate the small regard he paid to the body compared with its inhabitant: the outward

outward man; that which we hardly look upon as part of ourselves! - By the inward man, the man that dwells in the body and is out of fight, he means the foul, with all its powers and faculties. Thus it is faid in Job, 'There is a spirit in man,' a rational, immortal spirit. So we read of giving up the spirit, and of the departure of the foul at death. The phrases in the text, were used by the most celebrated of the heathen philosophers; and they fometimes call the foul, the man within the man. This plainly expresseth the Apostle's belief of his being some-thing more than body, of having a soul quite different and distinct from the animal frame. But I need not enlarge here. Let us consider,

II. The different manner in which each of these was affected. The outward man was growing weaker; the inward man growing stronger continually, instead of fainting.

1. The outward man was perishing.

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The Apostle doth not so much refer to the death of the body, as to its preceding decay. And the word might have been rendered, more agreeably to the original and the Apostle's design, our outward man decayeth, or is perishing; it is every day growing weaker and weaker. This may refer in part to the natural decay of the body in advancing years. Human life is confined within narrow limits. The limbs and fenses of the body, its various organs and powers, gradually wear out; and notwithstanding all the care we can take of it, it daily approaches nearer to its dissolution. Sometimes it perisheth by diseases and accidents, which in a few days or hours, destroy its strength and vigour, and put an end to all its capacity of motion and action. But the Apostle seems to have a particular reference to those decays of his outward man, which were occafioned by the station and circumstances in which he was placed. His necessary studies and labours, as a christian minifter and Apostle, would greatly impair it; especially as he feems not to have been a robust man, but subject to some nervous

vous complaints, which occasioned his bodily presence to be weak, and his speech stammering and contemptible. This he calls his infirmity in his flesh. St. Paul knew by experience, that to think closely is to labour; to speak long in publick large affemblies, is to labour; and that these affect the outward man more than the labour of the hands. Besides this, he had many peculiar difficulties and hardships to go thro'; arifing from the perfecution he met with from the bigotted Jews and Gentiles, and some enemies calling themselves christians. He was driven from place to place, enduring a great many fatigues and perils in his travelling; being often badly accommodated, and fometimes in want of all things. These things would encrease the natural decays of the body, and hurry it the fooner to its diffolution. Accordingly he observes, in this chapter, 'We which live, are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' fake.' And again, ' Death worketh in us; '+ it is continually working; undermining this earthly tabernacle, and will foon bring it to the duft. A difagreeable

agreeable fituation to be in! So most men think, when they are pained, weak and languishing. But not fo bad neither, intimates the Apostle, as one would at first apprehend; for,

2. The inward man, the foul, is renewed day by day.

It grows stronger and stronger. Tho' all its powers may fometimes feem exhausted, and quite disabled by difficulties and temptations, yet it gains fresh re-cruits: yea, it is made better by bodily infirmities and fufferings. It deriveth vigour from the decay of the body; and its strength grows in proportion as that perisheth. It advanceth in knowledge and experience; for tribulation, as he elfewhere observes, worketh patience, and patience experience. It grows more established in virtue and goodness. Its diligence is quickened, and its zeal promoted by bodily weaknesses; as they intimate that the time of working is short. It encreafeth in steadiness, from tasting largely the pleasures of religion, and feeling the good effects of faith, watchfulness and prayer. And And as these bodily decays intimate the fpeedy approach of complete happiness, we are revived and animated by the profpect of it. This effect is also expressed in the beginning of the verse, ' we faint not;' of which, the expression of ' the inward man is renewed,' is an illustration. We are not disheartened, or discouraged from doing our duty, by these infirmities; we do not fink into floth and despondency, because we feel decays, and are less able to purfue our labours, and struggle with difficulties, than formerly: no, but we go on with all the vigour we can exert; and are determined not to decline the glorious work, nor give up the honourable conflict, while we are capable of fustaining it. The strength of the inward man supports the outward; and that strength is renewed day by day: every day we make fome progrefs in our christian course, and go from strength to strength.' Happy man indeed, that had fuch resolution and activity, amidst such infirmities and discouragements! But to what was this owing? What renewed and strengthened the inward man, under fuch difficulties? This I am I am to consider under the next particular, which is,

III. The ground of the Apostle's happy experience on this head.

It is intimated in the text, in those words, ' for which cause;' and naturally directs our thoughts to the context. Now it appears, that the verse before the text comes in by way of parenthesis; and therefore we must look to the foregoing verse, where the Apostle expresseth his full affurance, that he should be raised from the dead by Jesus Christ, and prefented with the believing Corinthians, before the presence of his glory: and he purfues the delightful thought in the verses following the text, to the close of the chapter, and thro' a great part of the next. So that comparing these verses with the text, it appears, that what occasioned this refolution, courage and progressive goodness in the Apostle's heart, was Hope; the lively hope of a refurrection from the dead, and a bleffed immortality; or, in his own most emphatical words, in the next verse, a far more exceeding and eternal weight

weight of glory. - For the illustration of this we may observe, that the object of the Apostle's hope was a substantial good, yea the greatest good he could possibly receive. It was not fixed on earthly things, the recovery of perfect health, and freedom from trouble and perfecution, but on complete reft, holiness and happiness, in the future state. - And the Apostle's hope was well grounded. A precarious hope preys upon the spirit and weakens it. A state of doubt and uncertainty is painful, in proportion to the greatness and excellency of the object desired. But the Apostle had made such attainments in religion, and had fuch communications of the Spirit, as to arrive at a full affurance of hope. A well-grounded hope, tho' it should not rife so high as the Apostle's, is sufficient to strengthen the foul, whatever it fuffers with, or from, the body. Hope is a spur to action; it purifies the heart, cherisheth love and gratitude to God and the Redeemer, for raifing us to it; and these are the noblest springs of obedience. It maketh not ashamed, that is, it establisheth and delights the heart, under

APPLI-

der its various burdens. It keeps up the spirits under the languors and decays of nature. Indeed it is fo necessary a grace. that the foul could not subfift without it, while the object is absent; while the happiness it expects is unseen, and at a distance. Without it, our graces would languish and die: there would be scarce any thing to excite us to labour and activity, or encourage us to patience and perfeverance under fufferings. Hope doth, as it were, confirm the certainty and excellency of future happiness, as it is built on the promises of God, and expects something worthy of God. — To this it must be added, that the hope of the Apostle and of every fincere christian, is wrought and supported by the Spirit of Goo. The foul is made to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost: and on these accounts, it produceth fo noble an effect. This was the great support of the Apostle's mind, under all the infirmities of the outward man; even the hope of the glorious refurrection of his vile dying body, and the complete happiness of his immortal Toffit.

APPLICATION.

- 1. We learn that the Gospel is a great bleffing to the world.
- ' Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days, and they are full of trouble.' Before we arrive at old age, many infirmities generally attack us, and fometimes make our lives almost a burden. Our kind Father hath fent us a cordial from Heaven, even the everlasting gospel. Tho' it doth not remove the sentence of death. consequent upon sin, nor free us from the pains and decays to which fin hath exposed our bodies; yet it supports and chears the foul under them, and reconciles it to the thoughts of death. Yea, it makes, what is fo difagreeable to nature, the means of improving and strengthening our better part, and promoting its eternal interests. Let this engage us to bless Gop for the gospel, which brings life and immortality to light. It is fit you should be frequently reminded of this, as the peculiar excellency of the gofpel, and what calls for our daily thankfulness.

famels. In it we have the clearest discoveries of the nature of heaven, of its glory and the duration of it. We are begotten again to this lively hope by the refurrection of Christ from the dead; ' the hope of a happiness, which will fully satisfy the defires of the inward man. There is honour and splendor also for the outward: the inferior part is not forgotten in the plan of divine love. And this hope we have, as an anchor of the foul, fure and stedfast, amidst all the storms that may beat upon us in our passage thro' life. Christ rose, ascended, and was then glorified. And his faithful followers, whatever they fuffer, shall at length be raifed, exalted and glorified with him. -Let it excite our thankfulness also, that we have in the New Testament, the experience of the holy Apostles so particularly recorded: who endured a great fight of affliction and went thro' much tribulation. In their temper and behaviour we fee, what patience, chearfulness and courage, Hope can inspire. And while their example doth honour to that religion, which they were employed to propagate, and shows its fupefuperiour excellence to all others, it is also recorded for our admonition and encouragement: and the admonition is fo neceffary, and the encouragement fo ftrong and delightful, that it demands our continued gratitude to Gop, who hath given us his word, and therein hath affured, and by happy experience and delightful foretafte often convinced, his fervants, ' that the fufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.'

2. It is the duty of every one to take the greatest care of the inward man; and be principally concerned about its welfare.

Man is a creature of a wonderful composition; made up of body and spirit; each of which demands a proper care. But the spirit, the nobler part of our nature, undoubtedly demands our greatest care. This is plain and evident. But how few act upon this conviction! We all know, that we have another interest to be concerned about, besides that of the sless. is certainly our duty to provide food

and raiment for the outward man; to

guard it from injuries; to repair its decays, and to keep it habitable as long as we can. But the care of the foul is of the last importance, and indeed the one thing needful. What fignify all our pains to fupport and adorn the outward man, while the hidden man of the heart is neglected; while little or no pains are taken to support it with good principles, and adorn it with holy dispositions? Many things that contribute to the pleafure and gratification of the outward man, frequently hurt the inward man; therefore the interest of the body should be always facrificed to the good of the foul. Let us not be fo folicitous to enquire, how we shall secure the outward man, and have all well with that, as how to fecure the well-being of the immortal spirit. The outward man will perish; it will decay and die, and there is no remedy for it. But the inward man will furvive. When the earthly house of this tabernacle, in which the foul dwells, is disfolved, the inhabitant will remove to endless joy or woe. It becomes every one feriously to think of this. If the foul

S. 8. foul is neglected, impoverished and starved. it must be miserable when it quits the body. And all the pain and agony, which the outward man ever felt, will appear light and trifling, compared with the pain and agony of the spirit, when it is punished with everlasting destruction. If the care of the foul is neglected, what will you do in the day of evil, when the out-

hope.

ward man utterly perisheth? There is not, there cannot be, a more miserable creature on earth, than a man who hath loft his health, is much pained, languishing and dying, and yet hath no peace of conscience, no folid hope. He cannot live, and yet would; because he dares not die. - Awake then, my friends, and labour immediately to fecure a wellgrounded hope. In order to that, hope for nothing but what God hath promised; and hope for it only in the way He hath promised. The great thing He hath promised is eternal life; and the promise is made only to those, who by patient continuance in well-doing feek for it, and fix their dependance on Christ, as their K 2 3. It

the I very of the Beets.

3. Its should be the concern of every fincere Christian to strengthen his Hope:

That it may be more active and lively, fuch as he may live upon, when the body is fick and languishing. A weak and fluctuating hope is the great cause of our small attainments in Religion, and the little zeal we show to make progress in piety, and do good to the fouls of others. Let it be your defire and endeavour, that the inward man may be renewed day by day; that you may be every day growing in grace; adding fomething to your stock of knowledge, chriftian experience and comfort. In order to this, endeavour to live more by faith. Faith fetcheth in, as it were, that provision on which hope feeds, and which supports and strengthens the divine life. Meditate much on the joys of Heaven: it is a copious, delightful and edifying fubject, and will lead you more clearly to difcern how little attention the body deferveth, compared with the never-dying foul. - To this end also, let prayer be your daily business; and particularly seek further

further measures of the Spirit, to improve your graces; to raife you above an undue regard to the concerns of time and the outward man; and to feal you to the day of redemption. - The ordinances of the gospel are well adapted to confirm the foul in every thing that is good, and promote its growth in grace. 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' -On the other hand, the love of the world and inordinate fears and cares about it, will distract the mind; and if they do not quite draw it aside from the way to glory, will flacken its pace and weaken its hope. 'Hold fast, therefore, your hope without wavering, for he is faithful who

4. Let the Aged and infirm be careful not to faint under their afflictions.

hath promifed.'

Weakness, disorder and pain of body, are not in themselves desirable: 'they are not joyous but grievous.' But God the Father of our spirits, intends to im-

K 3

prove and strengthen the foul by them; therefore they should be patiently and chearfully fubmitted to. Labour, ye children of affliction, to keep up your courage, and look well to the frame of your spirits. Let not the infirmities of your constitution prevent your taking pains with your hearts, to keep them near to God, and strengthen every good disposition and habit in them. Let not these be an excuse for neglecting the house and worship of God, when they are not extreme; or indulging indolence and inactivity: for you will find religion and the fervice of God, not only the strength of the soul, but of the outward man too, by promoting the composure and chearfulness of the fpirit. Be not always poring upon your infirmities and complaining of them; but fee that all be right in the inward man. Nourish it up with the bread of life; apply by faith to the blood of fprinkling, and the grace of the Spirit, more completely to heal all its diforders and more fully establish its health. Obferve and study the temper of the holy Apostle. Take notice with what little concern

concern he speaks of his afflictions and decays. His language in effect is, ' If the outward man must perish, let it perish; I am not folicitous about that. If this tabernacle must come down, let it come down. What is this to me; fince the inward man is strengthening and improving daily; fince my hope grows more ftrong and lively?'+ Nor was fuch holy courage, and indifference about the state and concerns of the outward man, peculiar to St. Paul as an Apostle. Other Christians have manifested a like temper. When that pious and laborious minister, Mr. Joseph Alleine, had been long confined to his bed by a painful diforder, which deprived him of the use of all his limbs, he was asked by one of his friends, ' how he could be content to lie fo long in that condition?' To which he answered, 'What! Is God my Father, Christ my Saviour, and Heaven my inheritance, and shall I not be content without health and limbs? He is an unreasonable wretch, who cannot be content with a GOD, tho' he hath nothing else.' It ought to be your great ambi-K 4

ambition, my fuffering fellow-christians. to attain fuch a temper as this; and in proportion as it prevails in your hearts, you may welcome your infirmities, as the fore-runner of eternal health. A few pains and ftruggles more, and the outward man will be put off with all fits aches and forrows; and the inward man will appear in all its vigour; without a cloud upon any of its faculties, a clog upon any of its operations, or an allay to any of its enjoyments. A foul that hath this hope may rejoice, even in the views of death. Holy Mr. Baxter, who had not enjoyed a waking hour free from pain and fickness for many years, when he was asked, just before he expired, how he did? answered, 'Almost well.' --- It is my earnest prayer for you, who are aged and infirm, that God would ftrengthen you with all might, by his Spirit, in the inner man, unto all patience and longfuffering with joyfulness; and then, when flesh and heart fail, he will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever. Amen. be find the grand-light policies ; a may well one your long of more of

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animon, my lastemp fell vicestian.

Jacob's Acknowledgment of the divine Care, and bleffing his Grand-children, confidered and recommended to the Imitation of aged Christians.

Genesis xlviii. 15, 16.

And he [Jacob] bleffed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,—The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac: and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

THE text presents us with a very affecting scene; the patriarch faceb, blessing his grand-children, the children of his beloved son foseph, whom he never K 5 expected

expected to have feen alive, much less governour of the land of Egypt. The good old man was now above an hundred and forty years of age, and so weak, that he could not sit upright; yet his piety towards God, and his affection to his posterity, continued warm and strong even to the last. There is something very tender and solemn in this transaction, which I propose now to consider; as it will suggest some hints of instruction to all; especially to you, my aged and honoured friends, whom I would now respectfully address and entreat.—I shall,

I. Illustrate the words, and

II. Confider what lessons of instruction aged christians may draw from them.—
I am,

I. To illustrate the text.

And here are two things observable.— Jacob's recollection and acknowledgment of the divine goodness and care;—and his prayer for his descendants.

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1. Here is Jacob's recollection and acknowledgment of the divine goodness and care.

He acknowledgeth God, as the God of his pious ancestors, and as his constant preserver and benefactor. - He acknowledgeth God, as the God of his pious ancestors. - God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk. An instructive phrase; intimating that they believed in and worshipped Jehovah, the living and true Gon; were in a state of friendship with him, and made it the business of their lives to act as in his prefence, and in all things to ferve and please him. It was an instance of divine goodness to him, that he was descended from such pious ancestors; and it gave him pleasure to recollect their piety. - He also acknowledgeth God as his constant benefactor. hath fed me all my life long unto this day; not now and then, when difficulties occurred, but every day; ever fince I had a being, as the original is; before I was capable of thinking or contriving for myself. He looks beyond all fecond causes to Gon, K 6

as the author of all the conveniences and comforts which he had enjoyed, thro' fo long a feries of years. - He acknowledgeth God as his constant preserver; 'the Angel which redeemed me from all evil.' Angels, appearing in a visible form, were often the medium of divine manifestations, and instruments of conveying divine favours, to the Patriarchs. We read of feveral inftances of Angels appearing to Jacob. Tho' he had known a great deal of hardship and experienced many dangers, alarms and fears, yet he had been carried thro' all. He doth not ascribe his deliverance to his own prudence or courage, but to the care of Goo, and the guardianship of those Angels, whom He employed to defend him. Gop had kept him from many calamities; carried him thro' many difficulties; and feveral of those events, which appeared at first to be great and remediless evils, he found, had been kindly intended and over-ruled for good, especially the flavery of Foseph.

^{2.} Here is Jacob's prayer for his grandchildren.

He bleffed Joseph; either himself, befides his children; or in his children, He laid his hand on them, and prayed that God would bless them. - Laying the hands on a person prayed for, was a very antient custom; a proper form of marking out the person, and testifying the earnestness of desire in him who blessed him. He prayed that God would bless them: an extensive phrase; comprehending all prosperity both of body and foul. He expresseth his wish, that God would make them bleffed or happy persons:particularly, that they might enjoy temporal prosperity; that his name might be named upon them; that they might be called the fons of Jacob, be heads of diftinct tribes, and share with his immediate children in the inheritance of the good land; that their families might be profperous and flourishing; enjoy the fame prefervation and protection as he had done, and grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. - He prayed also that they might enjoy spiritual bleffings. This is comprehended in the general phrase, bless them; and is implied in that expreffion,

pression, 'Let the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac be named upon them; as if he had faid, ' May the gracious covenant which Gop made with Abraham. and confirmed to Isaac and me, be entailed on them: that covenant, which extends to, and includes, the Messiah, and all the spiritual bleffings of his kingdom, especially eternal life! May the Lord be a Gop to them and their feed in every generation! May the entail of religion be kept up in their families! May they behave worthy their relation to Abraham and Isaac, and support the worship and fervice of the Lord God Almighty, amidst a corrupt and idolatrous world!'-This may fuffice for the illustration of the text. I proceed,

II. To consider, what instructive lessons aged christians may draw from hence.

And they are chiefly these two. It is their duty to recollect and acknowledge their long experience of GoD's goodness and care; - and to bless and pray for their descendants.

1. It is their duty to recollect and acknowledge their long experience of God's goodness and care.

It was a precept of the law of Moses, · Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee, forty years in the wilderness.' + And it suggests to us, that it is the duty of all to remember the kind and favourable conduct of Providence to them. It is peculiarly the duty of aged christians, who have travelled fo many years in this wilderness, and had so long an experience of divine protection and favour. Let me therefore intreat you, Fathers, to recollect the goodness of God to you, and make mention of his loving-kindness. Particularly, - acknowledge, after the example of Jacob, his goodness in your descent from pious ancestors, if that be the case: the privileges of your birth and education; the piety and zeal of your fathers; the good instructions you have received from them, and the good examples you have feen in them. Adore that God, who hath

hath so graciously fixed your lot, and taught you from your youth up. - Acknowledge his goodness; in providing a Supply for all, your wants. Think of the feveral stages, of your journey thro' life, fince you hung upon the breaft; your paffage thro's infancy, childhood, manhood, even to old age. Recollect the mercy that hath followed you every day, and every hour; in every place, relation, fettlement and circumstance of life. You needed daily food, and a large stock of Gop's creatures hath been confumed in fupporting you for fixty or feventy years. This supply He hath given you; yea, many of the comforts and pleasures of life too, and indulged every reasonable appetite. The care of your parents, relations and friends, was no other than the care of Gop. Your wisdom in contriving, your health and diligence in labouring, for your own and your families' fupport, came from GoD; and his bleffing. prospered your labours. Look beyond all means and inftruments to him, who hath 'daily loaded you with his benefits.'- Again, recollect his goodness in preserving

preserving and redeeming you from all evil. He hath delivered you from many evils, which you have felt or feared, thro' the guardianship of Angels, the care of your fellow-creatures, or your own prudence and strength; all which are to be ascribed to his providence. Yea, he hath redeemed you from many unseen dangers, to which you have been exposed. He hath raifed you up from many threatening diforders; prevented many fatal accidents, and prolonged your life beyond what you have expected. He hath often over-ruled fome very grievous occurrences, for your real, lafting good; and made your mercies doubly fweet by a fhort fuspension of them, or your fear of losing them. Recollect also his goodness in raising you up friends: fome unexpected ones, perhaps among strangers; to guide your giddy, unexperienced youth; to warn you of dangers, and advise and affist you in emergencies. By these, or other means, He hath delivered you out of great and pressing difficulties; been better to you than your fears, brightened your gloomy prospects, and caused good to come out of

of evil, as in the case of Facob. - Recollect especially, his kindness to your souls, in delivering you from the worst evils; from being corrupted by bad examples and an enfnaring world; from being ruined by the devices of Satan, and the deceit-fulness of sin. He hath blessed you with many fpiritual bleffings in Christ Jesus: not only granted you restraining grace, and, I hope, begotten you by his Spirit to a new and divine life, but made ample provision for feeding your souls, promoting your spiritual health, and nourishing christian graces in your hearts. Every degree of knowledge and holiness which you poffess, all the peace and comfort that you have experienced and are now experiencing, are from GoD; from the rules, examples and promifes of his word, the labours of his ministers, and the influences of his Spirit. All your bright and comfortable hopes proceed from the God of Hope. It becomes you to trace back your lives with great care, and to observe how full every stage of them hath been of divine goodness. And, after every fuch furvey, to own the care of heaven,

heaven, with great feriousness, both in your converse with men, and your addresses to God. — Now let me show you, what good effects such a recollection and acknowledgment will be likely to produce.

(1). It will promote and cherish your gratitude to God.

A review of your many comforts and deliverances will naturally lead you to think, whence they came: a few moments reflection will show you, that they all proceed from a good Gop; and this will draw your heart nearer to him. Such a furvey of the divine favours tends to keep the memory of them fresh upon the mind, and to lead you to an habitual fense of God as your friend and father in Christ, to whom you are indebted for all you have received and enjoy. Without fuch frequent and affectionate recollections of God's goodness, you will be apt to forget your obligations; at least to lose that quick sense of them which it becomes you to feel. Present difficulties, burdens and infirmities might otherwife engage

engage all your attention; and your mercies and the author of them be too much forgotten. You can scarce take fuch a furvey without observing, - how few have enjoyed fuch advantages and favours as you: how many are born of wicked parents; turned out into the wide world. without provision, which is bad, and without education, which is worfe: - how many, who fet out with you in life, are long fince dead; fome of them, it is to be feared, in an unconverted state, and have therefore been long in torments:how many that yet furvive, have fuffered, and are still fuffering, those evils from which you have been delivered, and want those mercies which you enjoy. This will keep alive a thankful temper: and when you thus feriously recollect and acknowledge, that ' hitherto the Lord your God hath helped you; you will gratefully enquire, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

(2). It will tend to prevent your murmuring under the burdens and infirmities of age.

Every one knows that this is too common amongst the Aged; and therefore, I shall not be thought difrespectful in cautioning you against it. You are now arrived at those days, in which there is no pleasure. But a survey of the divine goodness will help to cure a fretful and complaining temper; by showing you that you have had days of pleasure, months and years of health and ease. You have known what the world calls better days, and have had a large share of providen-tial bounties. By thus balancing accounts, you will foon fee, that you have no reafon to murmur: especially when you confider, as true christians never forget it, how unworthy you are of these bounties, and how much you have done, every year and every day of your lives, to forfeit them. — Besides, if you are christians indeed, you have unspeakable mercies to be thankful for; what Gop hath done for your fouls; the beginning and progress of his work of grace in them; all the privileges, supports and confolations, you have enjoyed; all your reviving and delightful hopes: nay, even your present infirmities

infirmities and burdens are mercies, as kindly intended to wean your hearts from this world, and make the heavenly rest more welcome and joyful to you.

(3.) It will promote your continued activity in Gop's fervice.

God hath always fome work for his fervants to do, while they are in this world. They are to do his will, or fuffer it. It was an observation of the pious and excellent Dr. Watts, in the close of his life, that 'The business of a christian is to bear the will of God, as well as to do it. If I were in health, faith he, I could be doing that; and that I may do now. The best thing in obedience is a regard to the will of Goo; and the way to that, is to get our inclinations and aversions as much mortified as we can.' A ferious recollection of his goodness, will lead you continually to fludy, what you can yet do for him; how you may yet glorify him on earth. This will difpose you to serve him with all your active powers, and prevent you from making your infirmities a plea for negligence, while

while you have yet some capacity of usefulness. It will dispose you to recommend religion to all about you, by bearing testimony to its reality, importance and comfort, and by being examples of patience, meekness and chearfulness under the burdens of nature. Thus will a sense of divine goodness disfuse a genial warmth over your souls, which will make you bring forth the fruits of righteousness, even in old age. — Consider, once more,

(4). It will encourage your prayers and your hope.

Your past experience of God's care will be an excellent plea in your prayers for future supplies and defence, and will animate your faith and hope. You will naturally conclude, with the Apostle, that He who hath delivered and doth deliver, can and will deliver; that He will still feed and still redeem, even unto death. Going back in your thoughts to promises, that have been accomplished, will lead your souls to a chearful repose, in sull persuasion that what yet remains will be sulfilled in their season: yea, that He, who

who hath often granted you life from the dead, will quicken your mortal bodies, and bring them up from the depths of the earth. - This recollection will lead your thoughts to heaven, where your pious ancestors are; where they live to God; and will encourage your hopes of meeting them above, and being for ever with them. Thus St. Paul argued, 'The Lord stood with me, and strength-Thus St. Paul argued, ened and delivered me: and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.' + ___ Thus will your devout recollection and acknowledgment of divine care and goodness, tend to cherish habitual gratitude; - to prevent your murmuring under your infirmities; - to promote your continued activity in Goo's fervice; - and encourage your prayers and your hope.

Let me fum up this head, in the words of an excellent writer. 'Devotional exercifes would fettle the ferment of our youthful passions, and sweeten the last dregs of our advanced age. How would this make our lives yield the calmest satisfaction.

tisfaction, as some flowers shed the most fragrant odours, just at the close of the day! And perhaps there is no better way to prevent a deaghess and flatness of spirit from succeeding, when the briskness of our passions goes off, than to acquire an early taste for those spiritual delights, whose leaf withers not, and whose verdure remains in the winter of our days.' +

I now proceed to the other branch of instruction, grounded on the text.

2. It is the duty of aged and dying Christians to bless, and pray, for, their descendants.

It is our common duty to pray and make intercession for one another. Those to whom we are allied by the ties of nature or friendship, claim a particular share in our intercessions. Let aged christians, after the example of Jacob, pray for their children and grand-children. When they are absent, and removed to settlements at a distance, bear them on your hearts before God, and in every prayer make mention of them: especially

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pray for them when they are with you. Be frequently offering up a short ejaculation for them; and do it fometimes in their presence and hearing. There would be a peculiar beauty and propriety, were you, like Jacob, when you are weak and dying, to lay your hands upon them and feriously and folemnly 'bless them in the name of the Lord.' - Let Jacob's prayer for his grand-children direct yours. It will not be displeasing to God, nor unworthy your character as Christians, to pray that your name may be fupported, and your family flourish, when you are gone; that Gop would feed and defend your posterity, as he hath done you. But let God and them fee, that you are chiefly folicitous to obtain spiritual bleffings for them; more concerned to have religion maintained in your families than your names and fortunes. Let it be manifest, that you defire nothing fo much for your descendants as, that they may be heirs of the covenant of grace, and have the Lord for their Gon: that they may walk worthy their pious ancestors and christian privileges, and be a feed to ferve Christ

and

S. 9. and bleffing his Grand-children. 219

and uphold religion. Express in their presence your experience of the divine goodness, and your thankfulness for it. Exhort them to know and serve the Goo of their fathers; and accompany all with your earnest prayers.—To excite you to imitate the example of the good Patriarch, let me urge upon you these three considerations.

(1) It is a becoming expression of your faith and trust in God, and regard for your children.

It is a proper acknowledgment of God's providence, and your dependance upon it, to continue the bleffing in your family. Accordingly, the Apostle tells us, 'By faith, Jacob, when dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph;' + by faith in God's providence, revelations and promises. You will thus do honour to the power, goodness and faithfulness of God. It will express a proper regard to the glory of God, when you pray that religion may still be received and entertained in your family, as a sacred and honourable guest, while

+ Heb. xi. 21.

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while it is excluded from so many families where it once resided, and to which it added true dignity.—It is also a becoming expression of regard to your children. You can do little for them now, and must quickly leave them in a tempting, ensnaring and dangerous world. How can you better show your love to them and concern for their happiness, than by commending them to God, and leaving them in his powerful and gracious hands?

(2) It will be likely to make a good impression upon their hearts, and so qualify them for the divine blessing.

It appears from the history of the Patriarchs, that in their days, men considered a parent's bleffing, as of the greatest importance to their happiness; and feared his curse, as bringing and entailing misfortune and distress on the family. And no wonder; for God seems to have confirmed the paternal bleffing; and inflicted the calamity included in the prophetick curse. I see no superstition in supposing, that the wishes and prayers of serious pa-

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rents may still carry great weight with them. And indeed, this thought is so natural to mankind and fo much countenanced in scripture, that all but abandoned finners will pay great regard to the fenti-ments and prayers of dying faints. — It may be expected, that their descendants will receive their instructions with peculiar reverence, and join in their prayers with peculiar fervency. The lips of the righteous, especially of Christ's old disciples, feed many. Your dying prayers and bleffing may dispose them to retain a sense of the importance of religion and the divine favour, and to defire and feek the bleffing for themfelves. They will be likely to remember your instructions and prayers, when you are dead. This may be the means of keeping them stedfast to God, or reclaiming them when they go aftray, and either way promote their felicity.

⁽³⁾ It is the way to procure the divine bleffing for them.

God hath never faid to the feed of Jacob, feek ye me in vain.' When He com-

commanded the priests under the law, to bless the people, He said, They shall put my name upon the children of Ifrael, and I will blefs them.' + Gop hath often favoured the children of good men with fome peculiar privileges and influences from above, for the fake of their pious ancestors. And it is evidently a part of the divine plan, that fome should fare the better for the piety and prayers of others. This confideration, together with GoD's many promifes of hearing prayer, encourage you to hope, that your prayers and bleffing will avail for the good of your descendants. And furely you cannot, in gratitude to God, or love to them, deny them fo cheap a fervice, and not leave a bleffing behind you. - Thus will your folemnly praying for, and bleffing your defcendants, naturally express your believing regard to God, and affectionate concern for them; - It will be likely to make a good and lafting impression upon their hearts; - and to engage the divine bleffing upon them. I hope, my aged friends will habitually and strongly feel the force

of these motives, to imitate Jacob's example, and abound in the exercises of devotion and benevolence. These will afford them unspeakable pleasure in a dying hour; and they will be ready to adopt the words of the learned Dr. Donne, who faid to his friends upon his death-bed, ' I repent of all my life, but that part of it which I fpent in communion with God, and in doing good.' - I conclude the Discourse with these two

REFLECTIONS.

1. Let children desire and value the prayers and bleffing of their aged, dying parents.

When Joseph heard that his father Jacob was fick, he went to visit him, and took his two children, that he might bless them. Let the children and grand-children of aged, dying faints frequently visit them, reverence their instructions, hearken to their history of Goo's dealings with them, and defire and value their prayers. Their age, gravity, piety and experience, make what they fay to you,

or to God for you, peculiarly folemn, weighty and impressing. And whether you regard it or not, remember, God regards, it. If you mind what they fay, it will be a witness for you; if you defpife it, it will be a witness against you, in the great day. If you know any thing of Gop and religion, and the power of prayer, you will not despise or slight this their last labour of love.

2. Let the children of good men labour to fecure the bleffing for themfelves.

Your descent from pious ancestors is a greater honour to you, than a descent lies upon earth, that live without Gop. It should recommend religion to you, that God was the God of your fathers. It should be a prevailing motive with you to keep up the worship of God in your houses, that yours hath been a praying family for feveral generations. But remember, their prayers and bleffings will not on the whole avail you, if you degenerate from their piety and stedfastness. If

If you do not tread in their steps, and (in the language of the text) walk before God, as they did, the greater will be your guilt and your mifery. You will forfeit the benefits of Gop's covenant: you will miss of the bleffing and be rejected by him. And then, what will it fignify to wear their names, and inherit their fortunes? Yea, if you live to be a hundred years old, and enjoy the greatest worldly prosperity, you will be accursed of God and driven to an eternal distance from your pious ancestors, and from the presence of Gop and the Lamb. For thus faith the Son of God, and O that all the children of good men would think of his awful words! 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Facob, and all the prophets and faints in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.'+

+ Luke xiii. 28.

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DISCOURSE X.

Joseph's dying Assurance to his Brethren, that God would visit them, considered.

e following the rest, firmly believing

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GENESIS, 1. 24.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

THESE, my friends, are some of the last words of Joseph, that wise, great and good man; and therefore they claim your attention: but they deserve particular notice, because the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, that 'By faith, Joseph, when he died (or was dying as the word signifies) made mention of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning

ing his bones,'+ that they should be carried with them into Canaan, as in the verse following the text; firmly believing the revelation and promife made to his fathers, concerning their posterity's return to it. Jacob, his father, when he was dying, had reminded his own children of the fame, and ordered them to bury him in Canaan. So folicitous were they to keep up in their descendants the belief and expectation of their inheriting that land! Joseph is faid, in the text, to have spoken to his brethren concerning this. As he was one of the youngest of Jacob's sons, and lived to be a hundred and ten years old, it is probable, that many, if not most, of his own brethren, the fons of Jacob, were then dead: fo that, by brethren, we are to understand (as often in feripture) his relations in general, and particularly his own descendants; as notice is taken in the preceding verse, of some of his great-grand-children being brought to him. 'To them he faid, I die; and God will furely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which 1. 6 he he fware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Facob.' The illustration of these words may afford useful instruction to us all; especially to my aged friends, whom I am, at this time, particularly to address. And we may observe in them,

- I. The reflection which Joseph makes upon his present circumstances.
- II. The affurance he gives his brethren, that God would visit them: and,
- III. The further assurance he gives them, that God would at length bring them into the Holy Land. Let us consider,
- I. The reflection which Joseph makes upon his present circumstances.
- 'I die,' or am dying. He was very aged and infirm. He knew that neither his authority, power and honour in Egypt, nor his wisdom and piety, could secure him from the stroke of death. He found himself declining, and was now probably confined to a sick bed: he was therefore willing to improve his sew remaining moments

ments, for the instruction and comfort of his relatives. He had been a great friend and benefactor to them, as appears from his whole history. He had saved them alive in famine, provided them a comfortable settlement in Egypt; and now he was dying, he could do little more for them, than give them his best advice and encouragement. And this he doth with the tenderness of a parent, and with the authority and piety of a patriarch. ——Observe,

II. The affurance he gives them, that God would visit them.

'God will furely visit you.' This doth not so much refer to his bringing them into Canaan; (that is mentioned afterwards) as to his affording them his presence, protection and favour, during their stay in Egypt. For thus Jacob expresses the same encouragement, 'Behold I die, but God shall be with you.' + Probably Joseph saw his relations very much grieved and discouraged at the thought of losing him: losing their protector and benefactor

in a strange country, where they had many enemies, as being of a different nation, and different religion. The Egyptians were strongly prejudiced against them, on account of their occupation, as shepherds; and because they would not comply with the idolatries of that land. Foseph well knew, that they would be rigorously and cruelly used in Egypt: for so God had foretold to Abraham, 'Thy feed shall be a stranger in a land, that is not theirs, and shall ferve them; and they shall afflist them four hundred years.' + Therefore Joseph affures them, that God would visit them; that he would view their afflictions with an eye of pity, provide for their wants, direct them in all their perplexities, and protect them in the feafon of danger; that he would raise up another deliverer for them, when he was dead. And this they might argue, from his promife to Abraham, of ' making them a great nation; and from what he had already done by a train of mysterious providences, - in sending Joseph before them, - giving him favour in the fight of of Pherach, — rescuing him from impending dangers, — and making him the instrument of their support and security. From hence they might conclude, that some circumstances, which were in appearance against them, would turn out for their good. — We are to consider,

III. The further affurance he gives them, that God would bring them into the land of Canaan.

And this he argues, and teacheth them to argue, from the promife made to their ancestors successively; to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and confirmed by the oath of that great Being, who cannot lie; that He would judge the Egyptians, bring Ifrael out with great substance, settle them in Canaan, and give it them for an inheritance for ever. This intimated to them, that they must not think of settling in Egypt, tho' the country might be ever fo agreeable, and its princes ever fo kind. -It likewise intimated to them, that theymust not fear any attempts of their enemies to keep them there by force. Jofeph forefaw the difficulties that would arife

arise, and therefore he assures them, that God would fulfil all his promises, and bring them safe to Canaan. Accordingly you know by what a series of glorious miracles, God made the Egyptians willing to release them; conducted them thro' the red sea and the wilderness, and brought them to the good land, which he had promised to their fathers.— I am now to point out to you the useful instruction which these words suggest.

APPLICATION.

I. To aged Christians; and,

II. To those in younger life, who are the offspring of good men.

I. To aged Christians.

By them these words may naturally be used, as they are the language of an aged dying saint; as the good land, to which he refers, was a type or sigure of that better country, even the heavenly one, which the Apostle tells us, the Patriarchs sought; and as they have been often adopted by dying Christians, and addressed

to their furvivors. Now they fuggest to you, my honoured friends, these three important branches of duty; --- to think and fpeak much of dying; - to reflect that God will visit and take care of your posterity; - and to remind them of it for their encouragement, when you are dying and leaving the world. - Bear with me then, while I exhort you,

1. Frequently to think and speak of dying.

You well know that 'it is appointed to men once to die; ' that in the course of nature, your removal cannot be far off. Your frequent infirmities and sensible decays remind you, that you must quickly put off the body; and therefore it will be monstrous and inexcusable folly in you to forget it. Think of your death, as a certain, and as a near, event. But think of it seriously, as a most important and folemn event. Speak of it as a concern not to be trifled with, but what you are nearly and deeply interested in; as it is the period of your time of trial, and the commencement of an eternal, unchangeable

changeable state. This hath been the practice of good men. Thus Haac faid, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Behold, I die, faith Jacob, and am to be gathered to my people.' 'I am going the way of all the earth,' faith David. I am ready to be offered up, faith Paul, and the time of my departure is at hand.' 'I must shortly put off the body,' faith Peter. Endeavour, like these holy men, to make the thoughts of death familiar to your minds, and let those with whom you converse perceive, that you are daily expecting it. This thought will lead you to fit loofe to the world; to contract your business into as little a compass as may be; and to avoid all those cares and anxieties, which diffract the mind, and would call off your attention from better, from heavenly things. - This would engage you to make your wills, and fet your houses in order, that you may have nothing to embarrass your thoughts, or take up your time, in a dying hour .-This would especially engage you to be always ready; to fet your fouls in order; to renew the exercises of repentance and faith.

faith, and endeavour to have your hearts more strongly influenced by the love of Christ. - It would lead you to exercise those graces, which are peculiarly fuited to your age and circumftances; especially faith, patience, meekness, gratitude and heavenly-mindedness; and be daily aspiring after brighter evidences and firmer hopes. - It would direct your views to the good land, which Gop hath promifed. You would ' have respect to the recompence of reward,' and improve in your acquaintance with the work and bleffedness of Heaven, by conversing with the word of God, and meditating upon the glory to be revealed. Think of your pious friends and relations, that are gone before; as Joseph, in the text, speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Think how they are employed, and what their happiness is; that you may long to be with them, and be daily improving in your preparation for your change. - By fuch reflections and fuch a conduct, you will be preserved from the love of the world, be reconciled to the thoughts of death, and be willing to depart. In the mean time,

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time, let the expectation of death quicken you to do what you can, for God and your generation. Do it quickly; for you have not even the shadow of an excuse for delaying. If death finds you thus employed, be not afraid of it; for God will furely visit you with his light, and strength, and peace, and bring you to the heavenly country; and at length, 'deliver you from the bondage of corruption in the grave, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.'

2. Reflect that God will visit and take care of your posterity, when you are gone.

It will be a great fatisfaction to you, to reflect upon this, 'God will furely visit them.' Anxious thoughts will sometimes arise in your minds about those, whom you will leave behind. 'What will become of my poor children and grand-children, when I am gone? They will be orphans, or want a guide and a friend.' It may often give you pain, to think of leaving them in a world so full of temptation, sin and trouble; perhaps to strug-

gle with poverty, and meet with hard treatment from the oppression, deceit, or unkindness of others. But when these anxious thoughts arife, endeavour to banish them from your minds, and cherish this belief, 'That God will furely vifit them.' Labour to divest yourself of such affection to them and concern for them, as is painful to yourfelf, and no way ferviceable either to you or them; especially fuch as is inconsistent with faith in Gop and his promifes. Confider, that were you to live, you could do but little for them; and indeed nothing, without the affiftance and bleffing of God. You could advise them, but the Lord must direct their steps, and make their way prosperous. Leave them therefore chearfully to him and his good providence, ' in whom the fatherless find mercy; and whose visits will abundantly make up the loss of you, were your abilities much greater than they are. — When your generous fouls look beyond the narrow concerns of your own family and relations; when you are folicitous about the interest of religion, and ' tremble for the ark of Gon; ' remem-

ber, that anxiety about these is to be restrained: for God will surely visit his church: He will take care that it shall not be loft. The' you die, Christ lives. " He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and therefore, the children of his fervants shall continue, and their feed shall be established before him.' + - That God will thus visit those, that furvive you, you may fairly infer from feveral confiderations; particularly, - The goodness of his nature. They are his creatures, and therefore he will not forfake the work of his own hands. 'He is good to all, giveth food to all flesh, taketh care of man and beaft, and his visitation preserves their spirits.' If they are his children, you have still less reason for anxiety; for furely their heavenly father will give them all good things that they need. -You may argue this, from his promise and covenant. You fee, ' feed time and harveit, fummer and winter, day and night, do not cease.' The same providence, which first established their regular succession, is working to maintain it. Your offspring

offspring have the fame Angels to guard them, as guarded you; the fame word to direct and comfort them; the same unchangeable Saviour to redeem them; the fame Spirit to enlighten and fanctify them; the same covenant of grace to be all their falvation and all their defire. Now, the word of the Lord shall stand for ever; his goodness is from generation to generation, and his truth endureth throughout all generations.' - You may argue it further, from your own experience. ' Remember all the way the Lord your God hath led you through the wilderness. He hath fed you all your life long to this day, and redeemed you from evil,' and your fathers before you. And doth his power and care cease, when yours doth? Think of the feveral stages of your lives; the places where you have lived; the fcenes thro' which you have paffed; and especially the extraordinary appearances of providence for you; that, as you have heard from your fathers, so you have seen and experienced. Recollect what you have observed of Gop's dealings with good men and their children; and you will fee reason

and now am old, yet have I not feen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' + Then ask your own hearts these questions, 'Is the Lord's hand waxed short?' Is his ear heavy? Are the stores of his bounty exhausted? Is his mercy clean gone? Doth his promise fail? Why then should you suspect, that he will not visit your posterity, as he hath done you and your fathers? Let it be your care, my friends, to give glory to God, by acknowledging and trusting his goodness, and to 'encourage yourselves in the Lord your God.' I add,

3. Remind your posterity of this, for their encouragement, when you are dying and leaving the world, that 'GoD will surely visit them.'

Your fathers encouraged you with this thought, as Jacob did Joseph. Encourage your children with it, as Joseph did his brethren. If they have any affection for you, or any concerns for their own fafety and happiness, the prospect of losing you

you will be grievous to them. When you fee them discouraged, then is the time to let them know, that, tho' you die, God will visit them. Thus the Apostle commands the aged men and women, to be ' teachers of good things.' And really, aged christians are capable of doing much more good than they do, if that breath, which is fpent in complaining, were fpent in thankfgiving; and that time which is confumed in commending the past age, and finding fault with the prefent, were employed in 'fhowing Gop's strength to this generation, and his power to those that are to come.' + Let me intreat you to confult the honour of God, the welfare of your posterity, and your own credit and comfort so much, as to take pains to exhort and encourage those about you. -Exhort them to make religion their business, and God their portion and refuge. Affure them, that their own wifdom and power will do nothing without GoD: that nothing will make them happy, but his gracious visits. Speak to them often of the fuitableness and excellency of Christ,

as a Saviour: and affure them that if they love him, and live by faith in him, he and his Father will come unto them, and take up their abode with them. + Thus pious Anna, who was of a great age, spoke of Christ to all, who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' 1 Encourage them to taste and see, that the Lord is good. Pray for them earnestly, that God would be with them and visit them. Comfort them with this thought, that when father and mother forfake them, the Lord will take them up; and that his visits will be infinitely better, than any fortune and honour they can inherit from you, or procure for themselves. When you tell them that God will visit them, do not speak doubtfully of it; but fay with Joseph, He will surely visit you; and repeat it again, as he doth in the next verse. - To encourage your faith and theirs, remind them how punctually the promife made to the Patriarchs of inheriting the land of Canaan was fulfilled. It was indeed about four hundred years before it was fulfilled; fo long was their faith faith and patience exercifed; yet at last God appeared to vifit and deliver his fervants, and vindicate his own faithfulness. Hence you may be affured that those promifes which God hath made to believers of heavenly rest, will be as punctually accomplished in their feafon. - To strengthen their faith, tell them likewife your own experience: how good God hath been to you all your days; how much mercy you have found in every part of life; that it may be a motive to them to ferve him, and to hope and truft in him in the darkest seasons, and in the greatest adverfity. - Remind them often of the good land he hath promifed, the country you are going to. Speak of it with faith, with chearfulness and thankfulness, as the end of your labours and fufferings, and the accomplishment of your wishes and expectations. Express your defire and hope of meeting them there at length, and being for ever with them. - Solemnly charge them with your dying breath, that they never forfake God and his ways. Efpecially, that they 'fall not out by the way,' but ' live in love, that fo the God of M 2 peace

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peace and love may be with them.' If this be their character, you may affure them upon the best authority, that he will visit them with his mercy upon earth, and with everlasting salvation in Heaven. The dying words of christian friends, and especially parents, make a lasting impression upon the minds of survivors.

But it is time for me to proceed, and address myself,

II. To those descendants of good men, who are in the prime, or middle of their days.

And my exhortation to you shall be,—
that you encourage yourselves with this
thought, that God will visit you;—that
you pray for his visits;— and be prepared
to receive them.

1. Encourage yourselves with this thought, that GoD will surely visit you, when your parents and friends die.

If you are thoughtful and ferious, you cannot but have great concern about your journey thro' life; fensible of the many difficulties, temptations and dangers, that attend

attend you. These are greater, at least on one account, than those of your fathers; on account of the present state of religion; confidering how light even the profesfors of it make of fins of omission; how different they are from their fathers in neglecting to keep the fabbath and attend religious ordinances; in conformity to the world, and complying with its dangerous fashions; practices which our fathers would have trembled at the thought of. This circumstance encreases your danger. But let it not dishearten you. God will visit you. Consider him as the GOD of your fathers. Think how he visited them, and remember what you ' have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you, concerning the great things he did for them, especially in their days of trouble.' If new difficulties and dangers arife, his wisdom and power can never be at a loss to affist and extricate you. He can help you in a thousand circumstances, in which they, if they were living, could not. He is the God of your fathers, and you are his covenant-people; and his covenant will he not break, nor for-M 3 fake fake the feed of his fervants. Many of us have found it so. God hath not left us destitute of his mercy and truth, when the guides of our youth have been taken from us. We have found in him a wise, kind, faithful, powerful guardian; and having obtained help of him, we continue to this day. And this is his promise to every good man, whatever earthly friends die and desert him, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' 'Wait on the Lord, therefore, and be of good courage. Trust in him at all times, ye people, pour out your hearts before him:' which leads me to add,

2. Pray earnestly for his visits.

Do not you need them as much as your fathers, or more? Can you do without them? And are they to be obtained any other way, than by faith and prayer? Go therefore to God, and cry unto him, 'My father, thou art the guide of my youth.' Your parents affured you, upon the best authority, that God would visit you. But you cannot forget what they told you, agreeable to what he himself hath

hath faid, that 'for this he will be fought unto by you.' - Confider likewife, what visits of God they thought most valuable and comfortable; namely, that he would visit them with his grace and Spirit; shed abroad his love in their hearts, and that he would leave a bleffing behind him; a bleffing infinitely better than any earthly enjoyments. Let this therefore be your language, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest to thy people; O visit me with thy falvation.' + And let this be the daily petition and request of all of us, as it was of Solomon, ' The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; let him not leave us nor forfake us, that he may incline our hearts to walk in his ways and keep his commandments, which he commanded our fathers.' + But this reminds me of adding,

3. Be prepared to receive his visits.

Do nothing to forfeit them, or drive away this heavenly friend. God is too pure and holy a being ever to visit a M 4 finful

[†] Psalm cvi. 4. ‡ 1 Kings viii. 57.

finful heart. If you are not converted, justified and fanctified, by the blood of Christ and by the Spirit of God, you have no reason to expect his gracious visits. If you use an earthly friend ill, he will visit you no more. If you forfake God and fall into habitual fin, he will cast you off for ever, and his only visits will be in a way of judgment. 'Wherefore, let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall.' There must be the greatest care, that you do not decline in religion, and lose the life and fervour of it. For iniquity will feparate between you and Gop, and hide good things from you. If you grow cold and formal in religion; if you neglect to visit Gon's house on the fabbath, and his throne every day; or do it with no more feriousness and ardour, than if you were visiting and converfing with a common acquaintance, your communion with him will be interrupted: He will withdraw from you, and take away his good Spirit. And then, tho' He should visit you with ever so much health, riches and honour, your happiness is at an end. If you desire, that

that the God of your fathers should visit vou, be followers of them. Carefully diftinguish between their real excellencies and their weaknesses; and do not, as many unwife children do, throw them away together. I can hardly inculcate this too often or too ftrongly, that unless you imitate the piety of your ancestors, you cannot expect, that God should visit you. You are not to depend on their prayers for you, unless you daily and fervently pray for yourselves. Remember David's address to Solomon. ' Know thou and ferve the God of thy fathers; for if thou feek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forfake him, he will cast thee off for ever.' The piety of your ancestors, all their prayers for you, and all the admonitions and encouragements they have given you, will be a great aggravation of your guilt and punishment, if you fail to walk in their steps. Let it be your daily care, that your hearts may be prepared for the visits of the Lord; and that you may be getting ready for the good land, the better country, which he hath promifed. - And finally, when you are lea-M 5 ving ving earth, hand down this facred confolation and bleffing to your children, and folemnly commend them to God and the word of his grace. — To conclude, may God visit us all with his favour and love, thro' the rest of the journey of life; and especially make the last stage of it comfortable, honourable and useful! May He bring us at length to that rest that remaineth for his people, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Facob and Foseph, and all the saints, in his kingdom and presence for ever! Amen.



DISCOURSE XI.

The Honour of aged Piety.

PROVERBS, XVI. 31.

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

T is a dictate of natural conscience, that reverence is due to the Aged, merely on account of their age. It was frequently and strongly inculcated, by the heathen law-givers and philosophers, that every one should honour the Aged both in word and deed: and one of their Poets tells us, that 'they held it to be a great crime, and worthy of death, if a young person did not rise up to show respect to the Aged.' The general practice of the heathen, both antient and modern, confirms and illustrates this dictate of nature. The Scriptures command us to reverence the Aged, and to show them all M 6 external

external marks of respect and honour. But when wisdom and piety accompany old age, it is peculiarly venerable. An ancient jewish writer, in the Apocrypha, faith, 'Oh, how comely a thing is judgment for gray hairs, and for ancient men to know counsel! Oh, how comely is the wisdom of old men, and understanding and counsel to men of honour! Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory.' + Solomon comprehends these thoughts in a few expressive words in the text: the hoary head is a crown of glory, or a glorious crown; it is a beautiful ornament, and renders persons worthy of veneration and respect, if it be found in the way of righteousness; if they have walked in the ways of religion, and their long lives have been employed in the service of God. An important and useful observation, and capable of affording instruction to us all, especially to the Aged! - In treating of it, I shall,

I. Show

+ Ecclus. xxv. 4, 5, 6.

- I. Show on what accounts aged piety is peculiarly honourable; and,
- II. What useful instructions we may learn from the subject.
- I. I am to show, on what accounts the piety of the Aged is peculiarly honourable.

And here I shall mention these particulars. - It began early; - It is founded on knowledge and experience; - It is approved and steadfast; - It is attended with great usefulness; - and it renders them peculiarly ripe for glory.

1. It began early and hath long continued.

This must be supposed; and is indeed implied in the text, when it is faid, if it be found in the way of righteoufness; intimating, that fuch a one hath been long walking in that way. Perfons who have fpent their youth in ferving divers lufts and pleafures, and their middle age in the purfuit of worldly enjoyments, to the total or habitual neglect of religion, are

not entitled to this honour. Late converts, tho' their eternal interests should be fecure, will not only have less comfort in their own fouls, but appear less amiable in the eyes of others, than early ones. They will remember, to their shame, the fins of their youth and riper age; and others may remember them to their difhonour. But where persons have, with good Obadiah, feared the Lord from their youth, and walked in his fear all their days, they claim peculiar respect. They have indeed lived; lived to a good purpose; lived to God and Christ: and as this will be their own rejoicing, fo it will entitle them to, and even command, honour from others.

2. Their piety is founded on knowledge and experience.

We come into the world ignorant and without ideas. Knowledge is gained by observation, reslection, reading and converse. Our stock of knowledge naturally encreaseth with advancing years; and tho' it will be more or less, according to men's natural abilities, education, and the pains they

they take to improve their understandings; yet all will be continually acquiring new ideas; those that were in the mind will be reduced to better order, and applied to more useful purposes. Hence, tho' the Aged are not always wife, yet they frequently are fo, and always much wifer than younger persons of equal capacities, advantages and application. This renders them worthy of honour. But aged faints are peculiarly honourable, because their knowledge is of the best kind, and applied to the best purposes. - It is of the best kind. They have just notions of those things, which are of the greatest moment, and most worthy the attention and reflection of reasonable creatures. The converting grace of God generally begins in enlightening the understanding, and leading it to discern those things that differ, and approve those that are excellent. They who have entered themselves into Christ's school betimes, have great advantages for learning his religion; of becoming well instructed in the nature and defign, the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and being wife to falvation. Aged faints

faints are well acquainted with the best things. Others may know more of the world, of trade, of philosophy, or human policy; but they know Christ and him crucified. They have made many useful observations on the methods of providence towards them, their families and the church of God. They know much of the evil and mischief of sin; of the nature of temptations, and the many devices of Satan. They are well acquainted with the fuitableness and all-fufficiency of the Redeemer, and the pleasures of religion; and have a rich treasure of christian experience in their hearts. This knowledge renders them truly honourable; especially, - as it is applied to the best purposes. Their religion is not the effect of a hasty resolution, but a deliberate choice, founded on ferious enquiry and long experience. Their advancing years, their study of the works and word of God, and attendance on the means of grace, have enlarged their faculties and ripened their understanding; fo that they are fully convinced, that the ways of the Lord are right, and they have circumfpectly walked in them. They have had time to examine every thing,

thing, that can be alledged in favour of fin and holinefs. They have tried many of those things, in which the young and the unexperienced are ready to place their happiness, and found them all empty, void and deceitful; and this hath led them to give their young friends many wife and friendly cautions. They know, from frequent enquiries and long trial, that nothing but religion can fatisfy the foul; and that fearing God and keeping his commandments is the whole duty and happinefs of man. Now this wifdom is, as Solomon faith, an ornament of grace unto them. +

3. The piety of aged christians is approved and steadfast.

It is hard to judge of the real characters of men, and to know who are fincere and who hypocritical in their profession of religion. Many may put on the appearance of piety to ferve fome fecular purpose. Yea, worthy motives may prevail for a while; fo that we may entertain a good opinion of the integrity

of those who may afterwards fall away. It may, at length appear, that they have no root in themselves, and their latter end will be worse than their beginning. But the piety of an aged christian is approved. He hath passed through various scenes. and had calls and opportunities to exercife the various graces of the christian character. He hath been attacked by the allurements and by the terrors of the world; yet, like a good foldier of Jesus Christ, hath bravely stood his ground. He hath passed thro' the trials of adverfity, and the more dangerous trials of prosperity. He hath survived most of his friends; and by their removal, hath had his patience and fubmission proved. He probably hath endured fome perfecution for conscience sake, and yet maintained his integrity; and, by not 'fainting in the day of adversity,' he hath an inward testimony, that his heart is right with Gop; and he is manifested to the consciences of others, that he is an upright refolute christian. An aged faint, is like a tree arrived to maturity; that having brought forth fruit many years, in its feafon,

fon, flood many florms and taken root the faster, is known by all around to be very valuable. His long life fpent in the fervice of God, makes his virtues eminent and conspicuous, and bears witness, not only to the fincerity of his faith and profession, but to their firmness and steadineis. His perseverance in religion demonfirates the uprightness of his heart, the strength of his love to God and Christ, and the immoveableness of his resolution for his fervice. He is 'rooted in the faith, grounded and fettled; ' his habits of piety are confirmed and become quite natural; and the frequent trials of his faith are found to praise before Gop, and honour before men.

4. The piety of the Aged is attended with great usefulness.

God is glorified when christians bring forth much fruit: and in proportion to men's usefulness will be their honour. The piety of an aged christian is much to the glory of GOD, as it shows the excellency of his dispensations, and especially the Gospel, as means of producing

ducing and encreasing this piety, and bearing the christian on thro' difficulties, temptations and opposition. Aged faints have been, and continue to be, very useful to mankind. They have for many years shone as lights in a dark world, and produced a fecret veneration for religion, in the hearts of those, who will not be persuaded to pursue it. Their steadfast piety ' puts to filence the ignorance of foolish men,' who complain of the restraints of religion as unreasonable and intolerable, and of the Redeemer's laws as impracticable. It shows that the difficulties of it are not fo formidable as young minds are ready to imagine, and that the most powerful temptations to fin may, by divine grace, be overcome. - They are useful to mankind, as living witnesses to the kindness of God's providence, the riches of his grace, and his faithfulness to his promifes. The diligence and zeal of their vigorous days, rendered them bleffings to the world and church; and tho' they are ready to think, that they are incapable of ferving God and their generation in the decline of life, and speak

of themselves as quite useless, yet herein they greatly err. The light of their good examples shines before men; they are set forth as patterns of patience, contentment and thankfulness, under the burdens and infirmities of age. Their prayers are ferviceable to the world and to the church. While their faculties continue, they are capable of giving excellent counsel and advice to those about them, which, coming from persons of their age and wisdom, will have peculiar weight, and tend to strengthen their faith and resolution. Their accounts of their own experience in past life; their testimony to the truth and the comfort of religion, and showing Gop's ftrength and grace to the generation that is growing up, are very useful. And perhaps nothing hath made deeper impressions of religion upon the minds of the rifing generation, than the counfels and weighty fayings of their aged and dying parents. Or, if they are not capable of faying much, their patient fubmission to their afflictions, and their chearful expectations of death and glory, speak plainly and forcibly; show the excellency

5. Their piety renders them peculiarly ripe for glory, as their hoary heads show that they are near to it.

They are to be confidered as being on the very borders of the heavenly world, just taking leave of us, and speedily to be joined to the spirits of just men made perfect. The day is at hand, when their warfare shall be accomplished, and their everlafting reft and triumph commence. Their race, which they run with patience and perseverance, is just concluded, and they will foon receive the prize. And when we confider an aged christian as on the verge of heaven, and foon to receive the applause of Christ, we cannot but honour him, whatever his outward appearance may be. His graces shine brighter thro' the wrinkles that deform his countenance; and those pains and languishings, which are the harbingers of death,

death, are also the harbingers of glory. If we have any believing regard for the heavenly world, and its blifsful inhabitants, an aged faint that is fo like them, and fo fpeedily to be numbered among them, will be esteemed by us as worthy of great honour: and his hoary head will appear as a crown of glory, when we confider him, as just going to receive a more glorious crown, which will never fade away, nor be attended with any care, forrow, or fuffering. - From these particulars it appeareth, that the piety of the Aged is peculiarly honourable; - it commenced when they were young; - it hath been founded on knowledge and experience; - hath been well-known, approved and steadfast; - in consequence of it, they have been very useful in life, - and are peculiarly ripe for heavenly glory, and foon to enter upon it. - Let us now confider.

- II. What useful instructions we may learn from this subject.
- 1. The hoary head is a difgrace and reproach to an old finner.

What more despicable character can there be, than that of a man who hath grown old in fin, and fpent all his days in the service of the devil? How shocking is it to fee perfons in the advance and decline of life, who having enjoyed many religious advantages, yet appear ignorant of God and religion; and 'when for the time, they should have been teachers of others, have need to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of Gop!' How odious is it to observe them still hankering after the world, heaping up riches and acting a fraudulent or a mean part to gain more! To be an old drunkard, an old fwearer, an old mifer, what a horrible character! 'That is a miserable old age, (saith a heathen philosopher) that hath nothing venerable but gray hairs and wrinkles.' A jewish writer, in the Apocrypha, observeth, that · honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years: but wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age.' + If any of you, who are advanced

⁺ Wifd. iv. 8, 9.

advanced in life, have lived forgetful of Gop and your fouls, unmindful of the great end of life, and the bufiness you were fent into the world about, be now awakened, and go not on 'to treasure up wrath, against the day of wrath.' It is high time indeed for you to awake out of fleep: you have not a moment to lofe. The goodness of God in sparing you hitherto, and not cutting you off in your fins, is a loud call to fearch and try your ways, to fly immediately for refuge to the hope of the gospel, and to employ the fhort remainder of your lives in the best manner: else your hoary heads will only aggravate your ignorance, carelessness and prefumption, and make your ruin more dreadful. For thus faith the Lord, 'The finner being a hundred years old, shall be accurfed.' +

2. Aged faints ought to be reverenced.

Some reverence is indeed due to all that are Aged. It was a capital crime amongst fome of the heathen, to treat the Aged with contempt. And one of their most N ancient

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ancient poets faith, 'Reverence gray hairs and give the Aged your feat and all honours, and behave to them in every refpect as you would to your father:' and another of them observes, that 'Old men are the particular favourites of heaven.' The law of God required the Jews to ' rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.' + And it is mentioned as one of the calamities of Ferusalem, that ' the child should behave himself proudly against the ancient.' ± The persons of the Aged should be honoured, tho' their character may be detestable; and the offices of kindness and pity should be tenderly performed to them. But great piety, joined with old age, renders it peculiarly honourable. Let us hold aged faints in the highest veneration; fpeak of them and to them with the greatest respect; tenderly pity, and patiently bear with, their weaknesses, and consider the excellency of their characters, as casting a lustre even over their infirmities. Let us earnestly pray for them, that Goo would affift, support and strengthen them.

Let us also confult them and hearken to their advice. This is particularly the duty of the young; especially of the children of such eminent christians. Let them pay the highest regard to their instructions and maxims. They are, alas! too apt to flight them; or if, as they fometimes express it, ' they give the old folk a hearing,' they do not lay their admonitions to heart: and the confequence is generally fatal. Thus Rehoboam, the fon of Solomon, loft his honour and the greatest part of his kingdom, by forfaking the counsel of the old men, who had stood before his father, and following that of the young men, who had grown up with himfelf.' + Accordingly St. Peter exhorts, 'Let the younger be subject to the elder,' and show that subjection, esteem and respect, which the united charms of a hoary head and a righteous character demand.

3. Aged faints should proceed in the ways of righteousness, with thankfulness and courage.

N 2

I would

+ 1 Kings xii.

I would, with all deference, address unto you, Fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning: and would exhort you, - in the first place, to adore the grace of Gop, who hath restored your souls from your wanderings, and led you in the paths of righteousness for his name' fake: who hath fupported both your lives and your graces hitherto; fet this glorious crown on your head, and begotten you to a lively hope of greater glory, even immortal honour. -And let me exhort the aged men and women, as Paul commands Titus to do, that they be fober, grave, temperate, found in faith, in charity, in patience; that they be, in behaviour, as becometh godliness, and teachers of good things.' Let me intreat you to proceed in the ways of righteousness, and not be weary of well-doing. Remember the dignity of your hoary head, and be careful never to lose or lessen it. There is a remarkable story in the history of the Maccabees, which deferves the attention of aged chriftians. 'In the perfecution under Antiochus,

tiochus, king of Syria, Eleazar, one of the principal scribes among the Jews, an aged man, was commanded, on pain of death, to eat swine's flesh, which was forbidden by the law of Moses; but he refused it. Some of his old acquaintance, in order to fave his life, perfuaded him to take his own provision, and pretend to eat of the king's facrifice. But, (faith the historian) he began to consider discreetly and as became his age, and the excellency of his ancient years, and the honour of his gray head, whereunto he was come; and his most honest education from a child; or rather, the holy law made and given by GoD: therefore he faid, 'It becometh not our age in any wife to diffemble, whereby many young perfons might think, that Eleazar, being fourscore years old and ten, were now gone to a ftrange religion: and fo they, thro' mine hypocrify and defire to live a little time and a moment longer, should be deceived by me; and I get a stain to mine old age, and make it abominable. Wherefore, now manfully changing this life, I will N 3

will show myself such a one, as mine age requireth, and leave a notable example to fuch as be young.' And when he had faid these words, immediately he went to the torment. + Polycarp, a primitive bishop and a disciple of St. John, being fummoned before a heathen magistrate, and commanded to abjure Jesus Christ, made this noble reply; 'Fourfcore and five years I have been ferving Christ, and he hath never done me the least wrong: how then shall I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?'-Let your experience of the power and comforts of religion; let fuch examples of steady piety; let the near approach of death and your hopes of glory, all join to make you very careful not to lose the things that ye have wrought, and fully the honour to which you have a claim. Labour after greater patience and contentment, greater mortification to the world, which you are fo foon to leave, and to have your converfation habitually in heaven. Endeavour to be doing all the good you can, especially

cially by bearing testimony to the pleasure and peace, that are to be found in the ways of righteousness. Aged christians, (as I hinted above) are apt to be difcouraged, because they think they can do little for God. But, my friends, do the best you can, out of regard to the master you ferve, who doth not cast off his aged fervants, nor despise their feeble attempts to promote his interests; and who has promifed that ' to old age and hoar hairs he will bear, and carry, and deliver you, and never forfake you.' Do this, out of regard to your descendants, to those whom you leave behind, and to the support of religion. Endeavour, according to the language of the Pfalmift, ' to bring forth fruit even to old age, that you may flourish in the courts of the Lord;' that it may be faid of you, as of the church of Thyatira; 'That your last works are more and better than the first.' + Then will you shine in the double lustre of age and holiness, be the ornaments of religion, and 'come to your grave in a full age, N 4 like

+ Rev. ii. 19.

272 The Honour of aged Piety. S. 11. like as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season.'

4. It is the wisdom of young persons to enter on the ways of righteousness.

It is the duty of your parents, Young friends, to lead you into them and walk before you in them: to keep you from the ways of fin, which are the ways of shame, and from the company of those who are walking in them to dishonour and ruin. I exhort them to be careful, to train you up in the way in which you should go, that when you are old you may not depart from it,' but have the honour of having persevered in it. - Let me exhort all that are young to " chuse the way of truth, and to stick to GoD's testimonies; to remember your creator in the days of your youth;' and to be fober-minded, temperate, grave, humble and ferious. For confider, you may not live to be old; you may not have time or inclination to change your course hereafter; or if you have, it will be more difficult: or if you should, by divine grace,

grace, conquer the difficulty and become holy at last, the remembrance of youthful fins and follies will be very painful. To have devoted your best days, the strength and vigour of youth, to the service of the world, the flesh and the devil, and only the dregs of your lives to God, what a reproach will that be to you! - But I have very little hope of those who forget God in their youthful days. Confucius, the celebrated Chinese philosopher, observes, 'He that is arrived at forty years of age, and hath hitherto been a flave to some criminal habit, is not in a condition to fubdue it. I hold his malady to be incurable, and that he will perfevere. in his crime till death.' In like manner, an elegant writer of our own observes. ' Youth and manhood, not advanced age, are the proper stages of life for rectifying any wrong bent of temper. If that Sun, which God hath lighted up, doth not difpel the mists and fogs of vice, before the noon of life, it is generally overcast for the whole day.' + Indeed experience showeth, N 5

+ Seed.

that

that a vain, giddy, thoughtless young man or woman, generally makes a thoughtless, stupid, worthless old one: and the poet's words are often verified; ' A youth of frolicks, - an old age of cards.' Therefore I urge your speedy compliance with the call of the gospel, and your choice of God as your mafter, guide and portion. - This exhortation should come with peculiar force on the hearts of those, who are descended from parents and ancestors, renowned for piety. Confider, you who are the descendants of God's servants, what vast obligations you are under to him, for fo distinguishing a privilege; that you are accountable to him for the advantage you enjoyed by their examples, counfels and prayers; and that this will aggravate your disobedience and your ruin, if you forfake the God of your fathers. Confider how defirable it is, for your own fake, that you fhould be followers of them, as you would fecure the honour of aged piety. Confider how defirable it is, for the fake of religion, that you should rise up in their room and stead, and that the

S. 11. The Honour of aged Piety.

the unfeigned faith, which dwelt in your pious ancestors, should dwell in you also.

— Upon the whole, to use the language of the Apostle, 'this is my desire, that every one of you do show the same piety, diligence and patience, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who, thro' faith and patience, inherit the promises.' + Amen.

+ Heb. vi. 11, 12.



N 6

DIS.

DISCOURSE XII.

Leni salir bu na bancimuos

The Joy of aged and dying Saints, in leaving their Descendants prosperous, peaceful and pious, considered.

1 Kings, i. 48.

And also thus said the king [David], Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.

K faith one of Job's friends, fince man was placed on the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short?' This observation is illustrated by the history of Adonijah, the son of David, of which the text is a part, and the end that was so speedily put to the authority, which, he had unrighteously usurped. David had greatly erred in his conduct towards his children; especially to Adonijah; having

having ' not displeased him at any time, in faying, Why haft thou done fo?' This spoiled youth, taking advantage of his father's infirmities and confinement to his bed, 'exalted himself, saving, I will be king,' and began to use some popular methods to establish his interest. He engaged Toab, the general of the king's forces, and Abiathar, the priest, on his side. Nathan, the prophet, who knew that Gop had appointed Solomon to fucceed David in the kingdom, confults with Bathsheba his mother, to defeat the pretender's scheme. and to fet Solomon on the throne of his father. For this purpose they inform David of the plot, of the persons engaged in it, and of what fatal consequence it would be to Solomon, Bathsheba, and the peace and happiness of the kingdom, if the plot should succeed. David therefore orders that Solomon should be immediately anointed and proclaimed king: which was done, amidst the loudest acclamations of the people. Adonijah and his confederates heard the noise and shouting; and, upon enquiry into the reason of it, were informed, that David had made Solomon king;

king; that Zadok the prieft, and Nathan the prophet, had anointed him; that he was actually feated on the throne; that the old king had received the congratulations of his courtiers and officers on this occasion; and received them with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness, saying 'Bleffed be the Lord Gop of Ifrael, which hath given one to fit on my throne this day, mine eyes even feeing it.'

It may be fubservient to my present defign, to illustrate the favours, which David here celebrates with fo much pleafure and thankfulness. - Namely, that he had a worthy fon to fucceed him in the throne; - and that he should have the honour to fee him feated there.

David bleffeth God, that he had given him a worthy fucceffor.' It was a fatisfaction to him that he was not childless: that when, for his fin in the matter of Uriah, the fword had entered into his house, and slain several of his children,

Solomon was spared, who was the favourite of GoD; he having directed Nathan to call him Jedidiah, or the beloved of

the Lord; and that Adonijah's conspiracy

was soon and entirely defeated. David had great satisfaction in Solomon's character, as one eminently wise and good; who 'loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father; '+ in whom his people would heartily acquiesce and rejoice, and under whose government the kingdom would be peaceful, prosperous and happy. — Further,

' David bleffed Gop, that he had the fingular honour to fee this fon feated on the throne of Israel: mine eyes even seeing it.' The conspiracy of Adonijah showed, that the appointment of Solomon to be king, by David, and even by God himself, had little weight with men of turbulent and ambitious spirits; who, after David's death, might hope to fet afide the fuccession. He therefore looked upon it as a peculiar favour of God to Ifrael, and especially to himself, that his throne should be filled, and the peace of the kingdom established, during his life. He had thus an additional proof of Gop's faithfulness to his promise, that Solomon should succeed him, enjoy a peaceful reign,

reign, and build the house of God. He had an opportunity of feeing how wifely Solomon began his reign, and how firmly the kingdom was established in his hand. Amidst all the languor of nature, David's heart rejoiced in this happy fettlement, and he ascribes the praise to that God, from whom promotion cometh. - Let us put our fouls in his foul's flead, and think, what joy it must give to a dying prince, whose love to God, to his worship and to Israel, was so strong, to see his throne filled by fo wife and worthy a fucceffor, and the hearts of all Ifrael, except a few desperate men, united to him: and we shall not wonder that David, with such ardent devotion, bleffed the Lord God of Ifrael for fo happy an event.

From the words thus connected, we may naturally draw this observation, That it is matter of great joy and thankfulness to aged Christians, when they are dying, to leave their families in prosperous and peaceful circumstances; and efpecially, rifing up in their stead to serve God and support religion.' - I propose,

I. To

- I. To illustrate this observation.
- II. To show why such a prospect gives so much pleasure to aged saints;—and then draw some useful inferences from the subject.
- I. In order to illustrate this observation, it may be proper and useful to observe, that it is a pleasure to an aged, dying christian, to leave his descendants in prosperous circumstances;—it is a greater pleasure to him to leave them in peace and love, but—his greatest joy is to leave them in the way of holiness, and zealous for the interest of religion.
- 1. It is a pleasure to an aged, dying christian, to leave his family in prosperous circumstances.

It is the character of a good man, that he is not a lover of this world, nor anxiously folicitous about future events. Nevertheless, he considers himself as obliged, by the laws of nature, reason and the gospel, to provide for those of his own house; not only to furnish them with the necessaries

necessaries of life, while he liveth, but lay up for them fuch a share of its good things as he can, confiftent with their present support and comfort, and the other demands, which his great Lord hath upon him. He is not folicitous to heap up fo much wealth for them, as may be likely to make them idle, proud and luxurious; but only fo much as may fix them comfortably in the world; in that middle station, which may be most friendly to their piety and happiness. He recollects, with pleasure and thankfulness, that Gon hath bleffed his labour; that his children will not be left destitute and helpless, and exposed to all the temptations of poverty. He is particularly pleased and thankful, that what he leaves his family is the fruit of his honest industry: that he hath no ill-gotten money among his fubstance, to bring a curse upon it: that he hath not defrauded the king, his dealers, or workmen, of their dues: that he hath given Christ's ministers and the poor, fuch a share of his substance, as he thought in his conscience he ought to do, in proportion to the degree in which providence

providence had favoured him. He is glad that, in consequence of this, his family will be likely to have the bleffing of God, with what he leaves them. He rejoiceth in that declaration of Solomon, 'The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are bleffed after him;' + and he dieth with a full persuasion, that it will be confirmed to his children.

2. It is a greater pleasure to him to leave his descendants in unity and love.

David had feen and felt much of the fatal mischiefs-of discord in his own family: but he hoped the settlement of fo wife and benevolent a prince as Solomon on the throne, would establish and secure its peace. Contentions and quarrels, between whomfoever they happen, are grievous to all the fons of peace; dishonourable to religion, and injurious to its power: but between those of the same flock and family, they are most shameful and pernicious. The aged faint, when he is going to the world of peace, is delighted to fee his descendants peaceful and friendly; 21400 95

friendly; loving as brethren; courteous and kind one to another. It would greatly embitter his dying moments, if he had reason to fear, that, after his decease, they would 'fall out by the way;' or, if prudence kept them from open contentions, would manifest that coldness and indifference one to another, which is inconfistent with brotherly love, and would prevent their hearty concurrence in proper measures for their mutual benefit, or even the advancement of religion. But he departs in peace, when he feeth reason to believe, that they will 'dwell together in unity; abound in good offices to one another; and that there will be no strife nor emulation between them, except it be that laudable one, who shall do most for the honour and comfort of the family, and to promote each others best interest. This leads me to add,

3. It is his greatest joy to leave his descendants in the way of holiness, and zealous for the support of religion.

I doubt not but David's heart exulted and gave thanks, for Solomon's fettlement

on the throne, principally because he had all encouragement to believe, that this his fon would walk in Gop's statutes. build him a house, establish his worship and promote truth, justice and piety thro' all Ifrael. And next to the good hope of his own eternal falvation, there is nothing can give the heart of a pious parent higher delight than fuch a profpect as this. ' A wife fon, faith Solomon, maketh a glad father. The father of a wife child always rejoiceth in him; ' efpecially when he is quitting the stage of life, and can do no more for the church of God, than pour out his prayers for its prosperity. How is the heart of an aged dying christian wounded, even when he hath a comfortable hope that he is entering on eternal rest, to think that he leaves wicked and graceless children behind him! degenerate plants! who, notwithstanding all his care and culture, bring forth only wild grapes; who will be the grief of the righteous, a dishonour to the family from which they fprung, and to a christian profession; and who may be instruments of corrupting others, and thus

aggravating their own ruin! On the other hand, his joy and gratitude can scarcely be expressed, when he seeth his children. under the influence of religious principles and divine grace, knowing the God of their fathers, and not only escaping the pollutions that are in the world thro' luft, but deeply concerned to fecure an interest in Christ and the falvation of their fouls; giving themselves to prayer, and attending diligently and feriously on the publick means of grace: when he feeth them fixed in useful stations; ruling their houses well; supporting religion by their countenance and purfe, and adorning it by their lives. - Thus he hath just reason to conclude, that they are fo well established as not to be moved from their steadfastness. In consequence of this, he can most chearfully commit them to the divine care and faithfulness, leave them secure and happy in the friendship of God, and in the way to heaven. He can confidently adopt the dying words of Joseph to his brethren and posterity; 'I die: but God will furely vifit you, and bring you

S. 12. in leaving pious Descendants. 287

to the land, which he hath promised.' +
— Thus do dying faints rejoice and give thanks, when they leave their descendants in easy and peaceful circumstances, and especially when they see them rising up, in their stead, to serve God and support religion. — I go on to consider,

II. Why fuch a prospect giveth so much joy to aged and dying christians.—
Now this joy ariseth, partly from their natural love to their descendants;— but chiefly from their concern for the honour of God and Christ, and for the continuance and spread of religion;— and from their expectation of meeting them again in a better world.

1. This joy ariseth, in part, from their natural love to their descendants.

God hath implanted in all creatures a strong affection to their offspring; in order that they may preserve and sustain them, till they are capable of providing for themselves. This natural instinct or affection

affection is, in good men, fanctified by religion. It is under the government of a stronger and nobler principle: a principle, which leads parents to confult the spiritual and eternal welfare of their offspring. The care which they take of their children is attended with great delight; and even their folicitude about them hath its pleafure. But when they have a regard to their children's happiness, not merely thro' natural affection, but from confidering them as rational immortal creatures, capable of enjoying the greatest intellectual felicity, or liable to the most exquisite misery, and that for ever; it turns the stream of natural affection into a proper channel: and hence they have no greater joy than to fee them ferious and holy. Thus their children become dear to them, by a stronger and more engaging tie, than that of nature; even their common relation to God, as their Father and Friend; and to Jefus, as their Redeemer and Saviour. The real christian, from a conviction that godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life, that now is, and

and that which is to come, urgeth his descendants by all persuasive arguments, to follow after it; and when he seeth, that, thro' a divine blessing, his instructions are not vain, he rejoiceth over them with great joy.

2. The concern, which aged christians feel for the honour of God and Christ, and for the continuance and spread of religion, increaseth this joy.

I mention these together, because the latter is the natural, necessary consequence of the former. The great object of a good man's defire is, ' that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; ' that his perfections may be feen and manifested in the world, especially by the spread of his glorious gospel; and that he may receive that reverence, homage and love, which is due to him from all his rational, especially his redeemed, creatures. He rejoiceth, that, in order to this, God will have a fuccession of faithful fervants in every age, and that the number of the spirits of just men made perfect, will be continually increafing,

fing, by colonies removed from this earth. In this view it is a pleafing reflection to him, that he hath been an instrument of producing and training up a race of rational immortal beings, to ferve and glorify God, to improve in holiness, and ripen for eternal glory. - The good man hath fuch an ardent affection to the Redeemer, and feels fo much of the constraining influence of his dying love, that he earnestly prays for the prosperity of his church; and he labours, according to his station and ability, to promote the interest of his Lord and Saviour. In this view, he rejoiceth that his own descendants belong to Jesus; that their names are written in the lamb's book of life, as well as enrolled among the members of his church below; and that they are a part of that feed, which shall ferve Christ, and declare his mighty works and amazing grace to their children. - The aged christian feels so sincere and strong an affection to all his fellow-creatures, whom he is leaving behind, that he delights in the prospect of religion's being supported and maintained among them.

It is his heart's defire and prayer for them all, that they may be faved; that as one generation passeth away and another cometh, there may be in each a large number of holy zealous christians, who shall be like the falt of the earth, to keep it from general corruption; or like a little leaven hid in a heap of meal, to leaven the whole mass. It is his joy to think, that tho' he is dying, religion is not dying with him; that that will furvive and continue in the town and neighbourhood, to which he is related; and especially in his own family. He hath a chearful hope, that there will be fome, who may inherit his name and estate thro' future generations, that will uphold the cause of truth, liberty, holiness and peace; be pillars in the house of Gop, and the joy of fucceeding ministers in it. The more the dying christian loveth God and his ways, his house and worship, the more pleased and thankful he is, that there are those rising up in his place and stead, who will have the fame love and care. and be the supports of religion, when he is laid in the dust. --- But the principal 0 2 ground

ground of his joy and praise on this occafion is.

3. His prospect of meeting his pious descendants again in the heavenly world.

It is a most reviving and glorious confolation, which the gospel affords to dying faints, that when they part with their pious friends and relatives, it is not an eternal separation: it is indeed but a short one. For when Christ shall be revealed from heaven, there shall be 'a gatheringtogether of all his faints unto him; '+ and he will fo range and dispose them in the heavenly mansions, that those who were united in the bonds of pious friendship here, shall be happy in the renewed acquaintance and fociety of each other, and shall be ever with one another and with the Lord. What can be more cutting to a pious, tender, affectionate parent, when putting off the body, than to look on his children, or other near relations, and to think, 'Thefe, I fear, I shall never see more; except it be in circumstances of anguish and despair at the bar of Christ, and must bear my testimony against their obstinacy

obstinacy and incorrigibleness in that solemn day.' But, O, with what joy doth the dying christian look round on his pious dutiful children, when he thinks, that he shall soon meet them again in the presence of Christ, with their graces infinitely improved, and all their imperfections done away: that he shall have the honour and joy of presenting them to Christ, and faying; 'Behold here am I, and the children which thou hast graciously given me; which I have trained up for thee; and, being redeemed by thy blood and fanctified by thy Spirit, are now meet for the inheritance of the faints in light. This inheritance I shall share with them for ever; and my joys will multiply upon me, by the fight of every child that is a partaker of it.' 'I die, doth he fay to them, but my God will be with you and bring us together again to part no more.' Who can express the joy, which a dying faint feels in fuch a prospect as this! - His natural, his fanctified, love to his descendants; - his concern for the honour of his Gop and Saviour, and for the continuance and fpread

fpread of religion; - and his expectation of a joyful meeting, and an eternal abode, with his beloved offspring in the heavenly world, lay a just foundation for his joy and thankfulness, even in death itself. -I am now to conclude the subject with fome useful

INFERENCES.

r. It should be the earnest defire, and diligent care, of all parents, that they may have this joy.

What hath been faid on this subject should be a motive to them, to watch over the temper and education of their children with the utmost attention; that they may not have their declining years, and particularly their dying hours, embittered by painful reflections God hath committed to prospects. you, Christian parents, immortal fouls, which he requireth you to train up for him; and your own happiness very much depends on this work being well done; especially your comfort in departing from this world. Reason and daily observation tell

tell you, that you must die, and leave your families. You will then want every confolation. Sincere religion in the heart will then support it; and good men, in these circumstances, have been enabled to rejoice, that, ' tho' their houses were not fo with God as they could wish, yet he hath made with them an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and fure, which is all their falvation and all their defire.' But even then their hearts have felt a mingled bitterness, when the character of their children hath been bad, or very doubtful. - Let me, therefore, with the greatest seriousness, urge you, to train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;' that you instruct and admonish them, as David did Solomon, to 'know the God of their fathers, and ferve him with an upright and willing heart.' Frequently remind them, what a joy it will be to you to fee them truly religious; fo that if they have any gratitude, any compassion, or any sense of decency, they may give you this joy, and may be, and do, that, which will foften your dying bed. - Labour to instruct and accustom accustom them to rule their spirits and govern their passions; to live in peace, and love one another; and often inculcate upon them, ' how good and pleafant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' - Let your own conduct be holy and unblameable, that no 'iniquity of your's may be laid up for your children; '+ and that they may daily fee in you the amiableness and excellency of holinefs. Let them observe, that you are liberal to those who are in necessity, zealous to support religion, and ready to every ' good deed for the house of Goo, and the offices thereof.' This will not only be a pattern to them, but be likely to bring a bleffing upon your family, inftead of hurting it. The righteous, faith David, is ever merciful and lendeth, and his feed is bleffed. The pious Dr. Annesly, when one of his friends hinted to him, that his charity was too great, confidering the number of his children, answered, ' You quite mistake the matter: I am laying up portions for my children.'-Again, be careful to support your authority

> t Pfalm xxxvii. 26. + Job xxi. 19.

rity in your families, and to restrain the appearance of evil, without rigour on the one hand, or excessive indulgence on the other. It is no wonder, that Adonijah rebelled against Gop and David, when 'his father had never displeased him at any time, in faying, Why haft thou done fo?' had never corrected nor even reproved him. - To all your endeavours to promote the piety of your children, add your daily and earnest prayers to the God of all grace, for his bleffing upon them. Thus David prayed, ' Give unto Solomon, my fon, a perfect heart. Now, Lord, let it please thee to bless the house of thy fervant.' You have thus encouragement to hope, that your labour will not be vain; that your children will grow up, as plants of righteousness; that you will leave them behind you with much fatisfaction, and that they will be your glory, joy and crown of rejoicing, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - We may infer,

2. Aged christians, who have this joy, ought to be very thankful.

Bless the Lord God of Israel, as David did, that he hath given you dutiful and religious children, and spared you to be witnesses of their holy conversation. You know too much of yourselves, of human nature in its present corrupt state, and of the word of God, to ascribe the piety of your offspring to any thing peculiarly gentle and tractable in their spirits; to any uncommon prudence or skill in your instructions; to any thing remarkably engaging in your example. Even fuch advantages come from God, the Father of our spirits. He put an affection for them, and care of them, into your hearts. His Spirit opened their minds to receive religious impressions, and made your pious labours effectual for their conversion and holiness. Adore divine grace, which hath conferred fuch a diftinguishing favour upon you. - To excite and cherish your gratitude, consider how many pious parents are mourning over their Absaloms and Adonijahs; their disobedient and rebellious children. They have no other fatisfaction but this; fome glimmering hope, that

that perhaps divine grace may turn their hearts hereafter: or if not, that 'their own work is with the Lord, and their reward with their Gop: ' and that in the other world, they shall be so like Christ in holiness, as to feel no more painful fensations on account of the wickedness even of their own children; but shall, with calm approbation, behold their final doom, when Christ shall bid them depart. Such distressed christians claim our tenderest pity and earnest prayers. - Let those whom Gop hath honoured with pious children, and spared to see them established in the way of holiness, celebrate his loving-kindness in life and death. And let them confider all their joy on this account, as a strong obligation upon them, to employ their remaining time and ftrength, in endeavouring to promote higher degrees of piety, zeal and usefulness, in those that shall come after them. ___ Let me infer.

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^{3.} It is the duty of young persons to fulfill their parents' joy.

Let them be folicitous to cherish and manifest those graces and dispositions, which will afford their parents much comfort, especially when they are aged and dying. 'The father of the righteous, faith Solomon, shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wife child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.' + I might urge this upon you, Young friends, by many considerations. -You owe it in gratitude to God, who hath fo ordered it, in the course of his providence, that you should descend from a pious stock, and enjoy innumerable advantages, which the greater part, even of the christian world, want. - You owe this in gratitude to your parents, to whom you can never render fufficient thanks, or perform equivalent fervices. Think of all the pains and forrows, which your tender and affectionate mothers have endured to bring you into the world, to nurse and rear you. Think of their many fatiguing days and sleepless nights. Think

Think of the toils and cares of your parents, thro' a feries of years, to procure your subfistence, health and comfort. Think of the expences of your education; the folicitude, with which they have been continually following you; the exhortations, counfels and reproofs they have given you; and all the fighs and tears, the concern and anxiety, which you may have cost them. And will you be so unnatural, base and cruel, as to despise all this; to render them evil for fo much good; unkindness and even hatred for all this love, and 'bring down their gray hairs with forrow to the grave?' Surely, you will not, can not, be fo wicked. If you are, you will be abhorred by all the wife and good; + and the great God, who hath

† In what light the heathen confidered ingratitude and difrespect to parents, may be learned from the following passage. 'Knowest thou not, said Socrates, that the Republick concerns not herself with common ingratitude. But if any one be disrespectful to his parents, there is a punishment for such ingratitude. The laws reject him as an outlaw, and will not receive him into any publick office. hath feen all the concern of your parents for you, bottled all their tears, and registered all their exhortations and prayers in his book of remembrance, will most awfully punish you. He may, perhaps, repay you in kind, by fuffering you to have undutiful and rebellious children; who may be worse than yourselves, and come to publick infamy and execution, ' your eyes even feeing it.' He will, however, certainly make your plagues wonderful in the future state. Let those, who have hitherto forfaken the counfel of their pious parents, and been 'a heaviness of heart unto them,' think on their ways, repent and return to the Lord; that at length their parents' forrow may be turned into joy, to fee their children, who were

office. Such a one is incapable of performing any great action, or distributing justice. They who contemn their parents will be blamed and abandoned by all the world. If men fee thee to be ungrateful to thy parents, they will not believe that thou wilt be grateful to others. It is particularly examined, concerning candidates for offices, Whether they have been respectful and grateful to their parents.' Xenophon. Memor. L. ii. c. ii. §. 13, 14. were spiritually dead, made alive, and those, who were lost, found. - Those of you, who have chosen the way of truth, begun well, and raifed the expectation of your parents, ministers, and other christian friends, be careful, that you do not disappoint us. Let not your goodness be 'as the morning cloud and early dew, that passeth away; ' but labour to improve in wifdom and piety; to grow in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and to live by faith in him. To this end, ' be not high-minded but fear, and watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; ' that you may be more and more the joy of all that love Christ and his cause; and especially that your parents may have encreasing comfort in you, and may bless God for you with their dying breath. It is mentioned, as an amiable part of the character of the judicious Mr. Richard Hooker, that he used to fay, 'If I had no other reason and motive for being religious, I would strive earnestly to be fo, for the fake of my aged mother, that I may requite her care of 304 The Joy of aged Saints, &c. S. 12.

of me, and cause the widow's heart to sing for joy.'——I conclude with addressing you, in the words of Solomon, with a truly paternal tenderness and concern, 'My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.' +

+ Prov. xxiii. 15.



DISCOURSE XIII.

The Hand of God in removing our Friends and Acquaintance far from us, considered and improved.

PSALM IXXXVIII. 18.

Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into dark-ness.

of friendship are most rational, sublime and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and allays, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death, are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved.—This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy psalm, where our text is. He was exercised

cifed with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. 'His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth,' to his business or pleasure, to the focial or folemn affembly, v. 3-8. He adds, that 'he had been afflicted and ready to die from his youth up; v. 15. which feems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deferted him, and 'he was become an abomination to them,' v. 8. They would not affift him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly vifit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his diffrefs, were taken out of the world: and this, at a time when, thro' age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and affistance. To this he refers in the text; and with this he concludes the pfalm, as the heaviest stroke of all. 'Lover and friend haft thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darknefs.' This is a common case; and frequently the cafe

case of the Aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to out-live their nearest relations; the companions of their lives; their children, and fometimes their grandchildren too: and they are, as the Pfalmist expresseth it. 'like a sparrow alone upon the house-top. As I am now particularly addressing the Aged, I propose to confider this very afflictive case; and fuggest some thoughts and advices to them, which I hope, thro' a divine bleffing, will concur, with the forrow of the countenance, to make the heart better. -I shall, therefore,

- I. Consider the heavy affliction, with which the Pfalmist was visited.
- II. His devout acknowledgment of the hand of Gop in it: - and then, add fome useful reflections from the subject.
- I. I am to consider the heavy affliction, with which the Pfalmist was visited.

It will be proper here to confider, the persons he speaks of, and what was become of them. - The persons spoken of were, his acquaintance, friends and lovers.

Man

Man is a creature formed for fociety: he could not subsist without it; or if he could, would be a miserable being. There is some comfort in having, what we call. acquaintance; especially if they are senfible, neighbourly, well-behaved perfons. The common intercourses of life, visits and conversation, have their pleasures. They tend to remove the roughness of the mind, to increase our knowledge of human nature, exercise our focial affections, and promote civility and love. Even from acquaintance we may often want and derive assistance. But the original word, rendered acquaintance in the text, is in other places translated kinsfolk and familiar friends: and compared with the other words here used, showeth, that the Psalmist doth not so much refer to those, with whom he had a general acquaintance only, as to those to whom he was allied by blood or friendship, and for whom he had a tender affection. The ties of nature are strong and endearing. Where persons descend from the same stock, and have grown up together, there is generally a most intimate friendship formed between them.

them. The ties of friendship, where there is no previous relation, are often more tender and strong, than those of nature: and, as Solomon observeth, 'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' When persons have had long experience of each other's temper, and there hath been a free communication of counfels, joys and griefs; when they have, by a feries of kind offices thro' many years, affifted one another in difficulties and perplexities, and been intent upon promoting each other's wisdom, holiness and credit,-their hearts are knit together in the strongest manner, and the principles of gratitude, honour, love and piety confirm the union. -Such friends and relatives the Pfalmift had enjoyed; and-that he enjoyed them no longer, was the affliction, which he fo pathetically laments in the text. They were put far from him; removed to a distance. To lose the company of such friends is painful; for according to an Arabian proverb, 'The presence of a friend brightens the eye' and gladdens the heart. -To lose their counsel and advice is painful. To be deprived of those in whose faithful

faithful breafts we could repose our secrets and our confidence; who would mildly reprove our errors and wifely direct our steps; who would remove some of our grievances by their affiftance, and lighten the rest by their sympathy; who would lessen our cares and double our joysthis is to a friendly heart very grievous.-It is painful to a pious mind, to lose the fight of their good works and examples: for 'as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man, his friend.' It keepeth his graces alive and active, and excites a laudable emulation to excel. Tho' our friends were fo fituated by that providence, which fixeth the bounds of men's habitation, that we could feldom fee and converse with them, it was a pleasure and advantage to us to hear from them, and to read the friendship and piety of their hearts in their letters. To know that they were daily mindful of us in their prayers, and to have kept up the best kind of correspondence, by mutual addresses to the throne of Grace for each other's welfare, tended to strengthen our mutual affection, and prevent that decay of friendship, which distance and absence are apt to occasion. To be deprived of their correspondence and prayers, is therefore another painful circumstance in their removal from us .- But what chiefly afflicted the Psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into darkness; that is, to the grave, which is called in scripture, the land of darkness and the shadow of death: a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order or fuccession; and where the light is as darkness. + They were put fo far from him, that he could fee them no more; were dead and buried out of his fight; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them.-Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to sparkle with pleasure, when we met after long absence, are closed in death. The voice, that used to delight and edify us, is fealed up in everlafting filence. There is no converffing with them perfonally nor by letters. Not lands and feas divide us from them, but

but regions of vaft, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over; and which they cannot, and indeed would not, tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of fervice from them, for their families, for the church and the world. Alas! one awful. fatal stroke hath broke down all pleasing fabrick of love and happiness .-But these are reflections, which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin to grow very painful, as they foon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that, which is the second thing observable in the text; namely,

II. The Pfalmist's devout acknowledgement of the hand of God in this affliction.

'Thou hast put them far from me.' This good man, thro' the whole psalm, ascribeth all his afflictions, and particularly

the death of his friends to the hand of God. He takes no notice of their diseases: he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication: but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable.

The Holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us, that 'God maketh peace and createth evil;—that out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good; '—that the most casual events are under his direction, so, that 'not a sparrow salleth to, nor lighteth on, the ground without him; 'much less do his rational creatures and children die, without his notice and appointment. By whatever diseases or casualties they die; it is God who 'taketh away their breath; changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkeness.' With awful majesty God claimeth

314 The Hand of God in removing S. 13. this as his prerogative: 'Behold I, even I, am HE. I kill and I make alive: I wound and I heal; neither is there any who can deliver out of my hand!'+-He removeth our friends, who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may He not do what He will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and He hath a right to remand it when he pleafeth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge, they were finners; and, as fuch, had forfeited their lives to the juftice of GoD: and shall not He determine when to take them away? - They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe, that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and fanctifying grace, they were become his friends too? dear to him by many indisfoluble ties? Hath He not then a fuperiour claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it not fit that He should be served first? May He not call home his friends, when he pleafeth? Shall He wait for, or ask, our consent first? -He doth it, whom we can not, dare not,

gainfay

gainfay. ' Behold, He taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will fay unto him, what doest thou?'+-He doth it. who is infinitely good and wife; and doth every thing in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring: his goodness boundless and never-failing. Tho' his judgments are a great deep, and his fchemes utterly unfearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe, that He confulteth the happiness of his fervants in what is most mysterious and most grievous, and his word giveth us the strongest affurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of christians or the reafon of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness. - Thus have we confidered the Pfalmist's affliction in the loss of his friends, and his devout acknowledgment of the hand of Gop in it. - Let us now attend to those natural and useful reflections, which these particulars suggest to us; and may God, by his Spirit, deeply impress them upon our hearts!

P 2

APPLI-

APPLICATION.

1. The case here described is a very pitiable one.

It claims the compassion of all pious and generous minds. It is a very great affliction to be deprived of those, whose fouls were formed for friendship; in whom we faw more and more goodness, as our intimacy increased; and with whom we exchanged fo many endearments. It is an affliction, which the most worthy, tender minds are most fensible of, and affected with. It feemed to touch our bleffed Lord as deep as any other: for he wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. When fuch a stroke cometh upon those, who, like Heman, are advanced in years, and have their natural strength weakened by infirmities, it is peculiarly grievous: fo that they may adopt the lively words of the pious Mr. Herbert; 'Thou tak'st away my health—and more, - for my friends die.' They think it too late in life to form new friendships; or if they do, they feldom relish them fo well as the old. - The cares and anxieties,

anxieties, the many painful alarms and fears, which fome, whose friends have been put far from them, have felt, for weeks and perhaps months, previous to the feparating ftroke, render them less able to bear it: their own bodily strength and mental vigour being weakened thereby. In every case of this kind, the fufferers are great objects of pity. Let us put our fouls in their fouls' flead; enter tenderly into their afflicted cases; weep with them that weep, and pray earnestly for them, that they may have those divine fupports and confolations, which alone can 'revive them, when they walk thro' fo great a trouble.' Let us likewise affift and comfort them, as far as we are able; and thus, by bearing one another's burdens, imitate the example and fulfill the law of Christ.

2. Let us bless Gop for the friends we have had, and all the comfort we enjoyed in them.

It is our duty, as Christians, ' in every thing to give thanks;' and the death of our friends is not an excepted case.

P 3 When

When persons are sick and in pain, they are apt to forget the years of health and ease, with which they have been favoured. So, when we lose our friends, we are apt to forget how long a time we enjoyed them, and what comfort we had in them. Or, if we think of this, I fear it is more to increase the melancholy pleafure of grief, than to promote our thankfulness. But, furely it becometh us to blefs God, who gave us agreeable relations and faithful friends; gave us to fee and own their worth, and united our hearts in a fincere and strong affection. There is likewise much reason for thankfulness, that we enjoyed them so long; that our friendship was not dissolved, when it was just cementing, and we were beginning to taste the sweetness and find the benefits of it. We should most thankfully adore the fountain of all good, for the great comfort and pleasure we have had in them, - that we have been witnesses of their wise, pious and steady behaviour, in feveral relations and circumstances of life; - that they were persons, whom (to use an expression of Dr. Young)

- 3. Let us humbly fubmit to the will of God, when he putteth our friends far from us.
- ' I was dumb, faith the Pfalmist, I opened not my mouth, to complain or murmur, because Thou didst it.' God doth it; and there cannot be a more forcible reason, not merely for a patient submisfion, but a chearful acquiescence. Let me remind you, that He hath a right to P 4 do

do it, and is just, wife and kind in all he doth. He, we hope, faw them ripe for Heaven; and judged that the proper, the best, time to remove them to it. Per-haps He hath taken them away from the evil to come. We cannot look into futurity: but He who can, might foresee, that if they had continued longer upon earth, some temptation would have attacked them, too ftrong for their refolution; or fome affliction would have befallen them, too heavy for their fortitude. He might foresee, that their com-fort in relative life would have been embittered, and their future days filled with forrow. And could we have defired their lives to be lengthened out under fuch disadvantages? The aged christian is often lamenting and faying, 'I want my dear confort and children, to be the fupport and comfort of my declining and infirm years.' But can you be fure, that, instead of being so, they might not have increased your griefs and infirmities; and that God was not kind to you, in taking them away? - Among many confiderations, which might be urged to promote

our submission, let us carefully attend to the following. - Tho' our pious friends are put far from us, they are removed near to Gop, their heavenly father and best friend. They are not gone down to destruction, nor have they lost their being. What chiefly rendered them lovely in our eyes, was of an immortal nature and can not be loft. They reckoned nearness to God and communion with him, their fupreme felicity on earth: and they now enjoy it without interruption. They are ' absent from the body, and present with the Lord.' - Tho', with regard to us, they are removed into darkness, yet they are gone to the world of light. Their separate spirits are still in a state of thought and activity, and do not sleep with the body till the refurrection. They are departed from us, but they are with Christ, which is far better. They are gathered to their friends, who went before them; with whom they often took fweet counfel together, and conversed of the place where they now are, the work in which they are engaged, and the bleffedness which they enjoy. They have got better acquain-HILL

acquaintance and friends than those, whom they left behind; even 'an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.' They are got beyond the boundaries of Satan's kingdom, and out of the reach of fin, diftress and fear. They possess the inheritance of the faints in light. The Lord God is their everlafting light, and the days of their mourning are ended.'-Further, it will help to reconcile our minds to this affliction, to confider, that tho' our friends are far from us, our God is not. He is near to us; a fure and faithful friend; a very present help in trouble. Tho' the streams fail, the fountain flows, and will for ever flow. By his providence and gracious presence, He can fill up the room of a departed creature, and amply make up, what is one of the most pressing wants of mortals, the want of a friend. He can be better, every way better, to us and ours, than any creature, which He hath taken from us. - Finally, we are going after our departed friends, and shall be with them shortly. With this thought David supported his mind on the death of

of his child; 'I shall go to him, but he fhall not return unto me.' They have left us struggling with temptations, infirmities and forrows; and the struggle is harder, as we are deprived of their example and affiftance: but it will not be long. We hope foon to be with them; to fee them, know them, and converse with them, on terms of great advantage; without any prejudice, paffion, jealoufy, miftake, fuspicion, or any thing that may lessen our pleasure in each other. Yea, we ' shall be ever with them and the Lord.'-In the mean time let us consider, that, strictly speaking, death doth not dissolve pious friendship, any more than a short absence on earth; nay, it scarce interrupts or suspends it. We still love, and are beloved by, our departed friends; and this is the effence of friendship. They are not unmindful of us in the world to which they are gone: and tho' we cannot fee them, we may be often reviewing their pleasing and instructive image in our hearts, and holding communion with them by faith, devotion and hope. Let these considerations P 6 engage 324 The Hand of God in removing S. 13.

engage us humbly to acquiesce in the will of God; yea to say, with Job, 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.'

4. Let us be careful and diligent, to make a due improvement of such afflictions.

By removing our friends, God designeth to feal instruction upon our fouls: and let us be folicitous to learn it. Let our departed friends still live in our memory, honour and affection. Let us defend their reputation, and affift and comfort the furviving branches of their families. Let us particularly confider what was excellent and praife-worthy in them, as every good man hath fome peculiar distinguishing excellencies, and let us imitate them. For instance; were they eminently pious and holy, strict in observing the fabbath; lovers of reading, meditation and prayer; zealous for the support of religion; respectful and grateful to the ministers of Christ; faithful in the difcharge of domestick duties? Were they frugal of their time, not eating the bread of

of idleness; charitable to the poor; compaffionate to those who were in diffres? Did they act in life, not only with unblameable integrity, but with the ftricteft equity, honour and candour, and adorn their christian profession by a meek, gentle and chearful spirit? Let us labour to transcribe these graces and qualities into our hearts and practice, from the fair copy which we have feen, and go and do likewise. Let us follow them in the path of christian duty, obedience and zeal; endeavour to supply their lack of fervice, and be quickened to do fo much the more good, because their time and opportunity are ended. - Let us particularly learn from their removal; to be dead to this world. Are our friends and acquaintance put far from us? Let it wean our hearts from this earth, where we shall be often losing something or other, till we have loft our earthly All. Let us not think fo much of dead friends in the grave, as of living friends and living faints in heaven. Let us think in what way they obtained the glorious reward; that

that we may 'not be slothful, but followers of them, who, thro' faith and patience, inherit the promises.' Then will their death advance our spiritual life and comfort, and make us more meet for an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Thus our excellent moral Poet describeth the effect, which the death of our friends should have upon us;

Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
To damp our brainless ardors; and abate
That glare of life, which often blinds the wise.
What saith this transportation of my friends?
It bids me love the place, where now they dwell,
And scorn this wretched spot they leave so poor.

Thus smitten friends

Are Angels fent on errands full of love:
For us they languish, and for us they die:
And shall they languish, shall they die, in vain?

5. Let us be thankful for our friends yet living, and faithfully perform our duty to them.

Let us praise God, that all our friends and lovers are not put far from us: that, tho' we may have been visited with breach upon upon breach, and forrow upon forrow. and may have furvived most of our friends; yet we are not quite desolate. Tho' many channels of pleasure are dried up, others are yet open. Our furviving friends do not, like Heman's, desert us, when we want their fympathy and affiftance most; but still love us, and are ready to pity, comfort and ferve us. We are indebted for this to a kind Providence, which, in the midst of judgment, remembers mercy. - Let us be careful to put a due value upon our living friends. There have been inftances of persons, who have grieved fo much for the loss of one relation or friend, that they could take no comfort in those that were left; could never rejoice with them, nor fo much as look chearful any more. Such a conduct is very ungrateful to God, highly indecent in itself, very unkind to surviving friends, and extremely injurious to the mourners themselves. Because God hath put one friend far from them, they themfelves put away all the rest: and then, perhaps, are frequently complaining, that they

they have not a friend left. It is our wisdom and duty to maintain such a command of our passions and such a respect and affection for our remaining friends, that their friendship may, in some degree at leaft, make up the want of what we have loft. Let us show ourselves friendly to them, chearful with them, thankful for their visits, tender of their comfort and reputation, and diligent in ferving them. Let us rejoice with them in their prosperity, sympathize with them under their forrows, and, in a word, 'love them as our own fouls.' + - Further, let us make the best improvement of our friendships, fince we see how precarious they are. Let our converse and correspondence be ferious and edifying, that we may administer grace to one another. Let us strengthen one another's hands in God, and serve one another in love, especially in our best interests. If our consciences accuse us of any neglect in these branches of duty, with regard to those friends who are put from us, let us be The source of the second more

more cautious and active in performing them to those who furvive. - Finally, while we are taking comfort in our friends, let us remember they are dying comforts: that however dear they are to us, a parting time will come, and may come very foon. The Apostle sets before us the great leffons we are to learn from this reflection; The time is short. They who have wives should be as tho' they had none: they that weep, as tho' they wept not: they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; for the fashion of this world paffeth away.' + If we act upon thefe advices, the separating stroke will be less painful; and a foundation will be laid for an eternal friendship in the heavenly regions, in which there will be no danger of feparation, or interruption, any more. - I only add,

6. Let us make fure of a friend, who will never leave us;

Even the almighty and everlafting GoD. Many fignal honours were conferred upon Abraham:

+ 1 Cor. vii. 29, &c.

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Abraham: but this was the greatest, that he was called the friend of Gop.' + If God be not our friend, we shall be inevitably miserable, if all the Princes of the earth were our friends. The common relation of pious friends to the bleffed God, in and thro' Jesus Christ the band of union, addeth the chief Joy to their mutual friendship.—Let me exhort and urge those, who are enemies to God in their minds by wicked works, to renounce their enmity and return to him by fincere repentance: let me beseech them, to 'acquaint themselves with Gop and be at peace; and fo good shall come unto them.' But let them remember, that Jesus Christ is the only way of access to the Father; that thro' faith in his atoning blood, peace may be made, and thro' his mediation a delightful, lasting friendship established, between a holy God and penitent believers. No other friend can appeafe a guilty conscience, heal a distempered mind, compose and chear a troubled fpirit, eafe a dying body and make happy a de-

a departed foul. 'In his favour is life; and in his presence is fulness of joy.' Let good men value the friendship of God, as their highest honour and happiness; keep it inviolate, and live and die upon it. If earthly relations and friends die and forsake you, it is your misfortune: but if God forfake you, it is your fault: for 'the Lord is with you, while you are with him.' + Let it be your care and ambition to love him with all your heart, to live always near to him and maintain communion with him. View him every day in his works; converse with him in his word and ordinances; correspond with him by prayer and thankfgiving; plead his cause; espouse his interest; love and ferve all his friends; and, in a word, live to his glory. Let our repeated and painful experience of the vanity, uncertainty and infufficiency of the creature, lead us more and more to the fulness and all-fufficiency of the Creator. We have need of great caution, left our earthly friends should draw away our hearts from

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from Gop or engross that place in them, which should be kept sacred for him. Let it be our habitual care to 'keep ourselves in the love of Goo; and then all things, not excepting the removal of our dearest friends, shall work together for our good. Then we shall have just reason to believe, that when they are put far from us, our heavenly friend will manifest himself to us by some special, delightful tokens of his presence and love; as the Lord appeared to Abraham and gave him fome very gracious promifes, after that Lot was separated from him. + Thus may we rejoice, when we are left alone, desolate and afflicted, as in fuch circumstances our Lord did: ' behold ye shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the father is with me.' ± short, all earthly enjoyments are very precarious; and you may fee reason to say with a celebrated ftatefman; 'All things else forsake me, besides my God, my duty and my prayer.'-May the fountain of mercies

⁺ Gen. xiii. 14.

[‡] John xvi. 32.

mercies and the Gop of all comfort. pour the balm of divine and everlafting confolation into bleeding mourning hearts; and enable his aged Saints in particular, who are left destitute, not only to be patient in tribulation, but to rejoice ever more, and in every thing to give thanks: and they have the highest reason to do so; for He, who is faithful, unchangeable, and keepeth covenant for ever, hath faid, 'I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forfake thee.' + Amen.

+ Heb. xiii. 5. orig.



DISCOURSE XIV.

The Assurance of Rest and future Glory given to aged Daniel, considered.

DANIEL XII. 13.

But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

It was faid of Daniel, by an Angel of the Lord, that he was a man greatly beloved: + and one evident and remarkable proof of it was, the affurance given him in the text, of the happiness which God had in reserve for him. Many extraordinary discoveries had been made to him of the principal events that were to happen to the church and world, to the end of time. In the beginning of this chapter, he is informed of what is to succeed the end of the world: even the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment,

and the everlasting states of the righteous and wicked. Some hints were given him as to the times, when these events should happen. The prophet did not understand them, verse 8, and therefore defired to be more particularly informed concerning them. But he is told by the person that appeared to him, who feems to have been our Lord Jefus Christ, that they would not be fully understood, till the accomplishment explained them. And he is cut short with this affurance, which was abundantly fufficient and fatisfactory, that whatever was the state of the church and the world, his own state should be happy. He must therefore attend to his duty, wait Goo's time, and comfort himself with these pleasing prospects.—As Daniel was now about ninety years of age, the text will furnish out some advices and consolations fuited to the circumstances of my aged and honoured friends, whom I am this day to address. - And I shall,

I. Consider the charge given to Daniel; — and,

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I. Consider the charge given to Daniel; — and, II. The encouragement fet before him.

I. I am to confider the charge given

Go thy way, till the end be. Most commentators understand this, as a dismission from life. 'Now thou hast leave to depart out of the world.' But upon this interpretation, it is not easy to see the meaning of that expression, till the end be. And therefore I prefer the interpretation of Grotius, and others, who confider it as a charge to him, to attend to his proper business, to the duties of his station and age, till the end of his life; for the original word hath that fignification in many places; particularly, where David faith, 'Lord, make me to know my end, that I may know how frail I am.' +-It may perhaps be intended also as a difcharge from his publick office as a prophet. 'Go thy way; thou shalt feceive no more fuch visions and revelations of the Lord, as thou hast been favoured with.'-He had perhaps been too curious and inquisitive

inquisitive about the time, when those events should take place, which had been revealed to him, verse 8; therefore the Lord faid unto him, verse 9, 'go thy way, Daniel; which he repeats in the text. This may be a general admonition, not to be too inquisitive about those matters; but return to, and mind, the business of his place and station: to perform his duty as a servant of God, and to do the king's business, as one of his ministers and statesmen. He had been very faithful and zealous in both capacities: had earnestly fought the honour of Goo, the good of Ifrael, and the welfare of the Chaldeans. He is here, therefore, directed to persevere in those duties, which his age and circumstances would permit him to discharge. - The expression may particularly refer, to his being patient and contented in the troublous times in which he lived, and under the afflictions and infirmities he endured. The Greek version renders the words, 'Go thy way and be at rest, 'Be content with that station and condition, to which Gop hath appointed thee. Be not discomposed by any troubles that may affect thee, and thy

thy people; or by the forefight of those, which shall happen to the nations in suture years; but patiently wait and prepare for thy latter end, and do not complain of the length and tediousness of thy pilgrimage. Go on faithfully and chearfully, thro' that portion of life which yet remaineth to thee.'—To excite him to this, the Lord gives him the most gracious encouragement, and an assurance of future everlasting blessedness. And this is the second thing to be considered:

- II. The gracious encouragement fet be-
- 'For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' Now here are three things promised him;— a peaceful retreat in the grave;—a glorious resurrection from it;—and a happy portion in the heavenly world.
- 1. He is promised a peaceful retreat in the grave.

Thou shalt rest. This, I think, evidently refers to his death. 'Thou shalt die in peace, and enter upon a state of rest.'

And this is a common description of the death of good men in Scripture, and well fuited to their circumstances here. -It implies, that the present is a state of trouble and disquietude: that man who is born of a woman is full of trouble. Little rest is to be expected here. Sorrows fucceed one another with few and fhort intervals, and fometimes continue almost uninterrupted for months and years together. Good men, and good ministers in particular, have their peculiar troubles: and these Daniel had experienced. But they shall rest. Their bodies shall rest in the grave, and their fouls shall rest with God. - Their bodies shall rest in the grave. So Job, speaking of it, faith; 'There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest.' + And Isaiah saith of the righteous, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds.' They shall be entirely free from what is opposite to rest; from whatever may give pain and uneafiness to the foul. The body shall then have no wants to supply. No pain or uneafiness shall attack it: and tho' it corrupts in the grave.

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it is insensible of sit, and the separate spirit does not feel it, nor is affected by the knowledge of it. The good man refts from those labours, which make him faint and weary; and from all his troubles and forrows occasioned by the afflictions and the wickedness of others. He fears not for his relations: he weeps not for his friends. The terrors of the world, perfecution, reproach and ridicule for his piety, never disturb his peaceful repose. He that is dead in Christ, is freed from the acts of fin; from all temptations to it, from all concern and remorfe about it. Tho' the power of fin is broken by renewing and fanctifying grace, it will difturb his peace while he is in the body; on this account, the best and holiest men are in some measure in a restless condition, But when he hath put off the body of fin and death, his conflict and his uneafiness cease. - But farther, Their fouls shall rest with Gop. The former is a kind of negative happiness: the rest of a dead brute, that feels and fears nothing. But the rest we are speaking of, is the rest of a being that Hill exists, a rational, active spirit; that is not destroyed and lost, but only

only retired from the world. The rational fanctified foul cannot be easy in a mere freedom from pain and forrow. It wants fomething fuited to its nature; that will fatisfy and fill its defires: and this it finds in Gop, to whom it returns, as to its rest and portion and happiness. It experiences the highest acquiescence and delight in the presence of Goo; for there is fulness of joy. The rest of the foul doth not imply its fleep; its being in an infenfible state. It never sleeps while in the body, and it would be strange, if it should sleep when out of it. No; when absent from the body, it is present with the Lord. It departs, and is with Christ, which is far better, and lives to him. There remaineth a rest to the people of Goo, faith the Apostle: the word is, the keeping of a sabbath, which is not an indolent repose, (tho' too many make it so) but a holy, devout, praising, active rest; the employment of all its faculties upon Goo; delightfully reviewing and reflecting upon what He hath done for it. The good man is happy in his favour and enjoyment, in the communications of his Q 3 love: 342 The Affurance given to Daniel S. 14.

love; in the exercises of devout admiration, love and joy; and in the returns of homage and praise to his great benefactor.—All this is attended with joyful reflections on what is yet to come; the prospect of greater honour and felicity at the resurrection, and their continuance for ever. Thus faith the Psalmist, 'As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness:' + which leads me to add,

- 2. Daniel is promifed a glorious refurrection from the grave.
- 'Thou shalt rest, and at the end of the days stand in thy lot:' intimating, that this rest in the grave was to continue to the end of the days, and that he was then to stand in his lot. In this sense the Jewish and most Christian interpreters understand it. In verse 2, he had been told, that when Michael the great prince, that is Christ, appeared, those that slept in the dust of the earth should awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and

everlasting contempt. The end of the days, therefore, refers to the resurrection. -Here then let us observe, That days hall have an end. Not only Daniel's days, and mine, and yours, but all days shall come to a period. Hence we often read of the last day. The revolution of feafons shall cease. The fun and moon, those faithful measurers of time, shall be destroyed. Time itself shall be no longer; but days and time be all swallowed up in eternity. - Then Daniel with the rest of God's faithful servants, shall arise. and stand upon the earth. When the ftormy weather is all over, when the noise of the earth ceases, and the distress of nations is at an end; then the fun of righteoufness shall arise in brighter glory upon this dark world, and his lustre shall rouse all that sleep in the dust. Their long rest shall be broken; and Saints shall awake to everlasting life: not as formerly after the repose of the night, to the fame cares, and pains, and forrows; the fame doubts and fears, temptations and corruptions, or greater: but to everlafting health and vigour, holiness and joy. Thus 700

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Job faith, 'Man lieth down and rifeth not, till the heavens be no more. But then God will remember them, and raise them out of their sleep: He will call them out of the dust, and they will answer him; and He will have a desire to the work of his hands.' † Their bodies shall rise and stand on the earth, glorious and honourable; and they will lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh.—Once more,

3. Daniel is promifed a happy portion in the heavenly world.

It had been said, verse 2. Some shall rise to everlasting life. And here, Thou shalt stand in thy lot. The portion of good men hereafter is called their Lot, in allusion to the division of Canaan by lot, when the tribes and families of Israel had their respective shares and inheritances in it: and so the word lot is used, to signify any state or condition, which God hath assigned to men, whether in this or the future world.— Now, the expression in the text intimates, that there

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shall be a day of judgment, when every man shall be tried, and have his lot publickly affigned him; not by chance, but the perfect wisdom and rectitude of the supreme judge, according to what he was, and had done, while in the body.

— It may intimate farther, that good men shall stand in that judgment; and not, like the wicked, flee to hide themselves from the presence of their judge. And the text may be illustrated by what David faith, ' The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor finners in the congregation, or affembly, of the righteous.' + They shall have 'Boldness in the day of judgment. When He shall appear, they shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming.' 1- Further, the expression of standing in his lot, intimates, that there shall be different lots or portions affigned to good men, according to the degree of their holiness and usefulness here. Daniel had his lot, and other good men have theirs. Every man shall receive his own reward for his own labours.' Their glory shall be proportioned r Job xiv. ne

⁺ Pfalm i. 5. 1 1 John ii. 28. iv. 17.

portioned to their piety, faithfulness, and zeal. So it is faid, in verse 3. 'Theythat be wife shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever,' with greater brightness. They who have diftinguished themselves by their piety, zcal and benevolence, for a long course of years, shall be promoted to the highest and brightest of those mansions, which Christ is preparing in his Father's house. - Once more, It shall be an abiding felicity. This may be meant by the phrase standing in his lot, as the word fignifies standing fast, so as not to be removed. Their lot is fixed and determined by the Almighty, and therefore cannot be changed. So we read in verse 3, of shining as the stars for ever and ever. Earthly substances are transitory; but this is a better, an enduring substance. Earthly inheritances are not for ever; but the heavenly one, is incorruptible and fadeth not away. The brighter discoveries of the New Testament assure us of the eternity of the happiness of the Saints. Their lot is to appear with Christ in glory; to walk with

with him in white robes; to behold his glory, and be for ever with him.' He appoints to them their lot, ' even an everlasting kingdom, as his Father hath appointed unto him.' - Let us review the gracious encouragement given to Daniel in his old Age. - God promifeth him a peaceful retreat from this world; that his body should rest in the grave, and his foul rest and be happy with Gop. - That at the refurrection, he should return to this world and appear in a glorious form; - and that he should have a happy lot, inheritance and portion, in the heavenly world. This bleffedness God hath promifed to all his faithful fervants. Let me now show you to what practical purposes this subject is to be improved.

APPLICATION.

1. See the necessity of securing a happy lot for ourselves.

Observe, my brethren, how kindly Gop treats his servants; how comfortably He speaks to them; how well He provides for them: and therefore how defirable it

348 The Affurance given to Daniel S. 14. is to be of their number. Our end is drawing on apace. Our days and years will foon come to a period. The end of every year, every month, every week, yea every day, naturally reminds us of death, which is the end of all men. The living ought therefore to lay it to heart; and it must be inexcusable folly and stupidity not to reflect upon it; especially as our end may come fuddenly, and before we expect it. But you well know, that death is not the end of your being. The body rests and moulders in the grave; but what then becomes of the foul? Solomon tells us; 'when the dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it.' It enters on a new scene of being: goes to an abiding place; an unchanging state. If thy lot then be good and happy, it will be always fo. If it be bad, it will never change for the better. Those who are in Christ, 'die in the Lord, and rest from their labours, and their works follow them. And at the great day, Christ shall bring them with him, and give them the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the the earth. But the men of the world have their portion in this life; they die in their fins, and go to the place of tor-ment. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are their lot. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup +. They had their lot of good things in this life, and God's people their evil things: but they shall be comforted and sinners tormented. It ought, therefore, to be your greatest care to secure a happy lot hereafter; and this must be chosen and pursued now. God doth not bestow eternal happiness by chance; but upon those who are qualified for it, by complying with the terms of the gospel, and living godly in Christ Jesus. You must be, as the Apostle expresseth it, ' made meet, or fit, for the inheritance of the faints in light,' t or to have a portion or share of their inheritance, as the word fignifies. If you defire to have Daniel's happy lot, you must live like him: and let me remind you what manner of man he was, and how he lived.

He was eminent for his early piety, his diligent study of the scriptures and fervent devotion. He was zealous for Gop and religion; immoveably firm and refolute in the midst of a wicked generation; and chose rather to die in the lion's den, than to displease God, and act against his confcience. You may not be called to his trials; but if you are not faithful and steady in less, you will never stand in greater. 'Work out, then, your own falvation with fear and trembling. If finners entice you, confent not: if they fay, cast in thy lot among us; '+ reject the propofal with abhorrence. For if you have your lot with them here, you will have it with them hereafter. Let it be your care to secure an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose hand is the final lot of mortals; and to live by faith in him; that when he appears, you may have confidence. Give all diligence to prepare for your latter end, for it may come unawares. 'Bleffed is that fervant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find watching.'

2. Let

2. Let the fervants of Gop attend to the charge given to Daniel; especially those, who, like him, are in the decline of life; and learn their duty from it.

To you, Fathers, I would respectfully address, and exhort you to go your way: to retire, as much as may be, from the world. You are not indeed to leave your occupations and flations, while God gives you capacities for business, and your circumstances or families need your application to it. But what I mean is, that you should retire, as much as you can, from the hurry and fatigue of business and company. 'The fashion of this world paffeth away.' The world itself is growing old and dying; and your end will quickly come. Go away then, and rest. Death will be very grievous to those who have always been buftling in the world, and fond of company; and have not been used to retire for sober, serious thoughts. You must die alone; and not one of your friends will go with you thro' the dark valley. Retire then, and commune with your own hearts: reflect on what

what you have feen, and heard, and read, of divine things dand acquaint yourselves more with Goo, and Chrift, and the eternal world, to which you are going . How long have I to live, faith good old Barzillai, that I should go with the king to Jerusalem? + Go to court! Alas, it is time for me to think of dying, and going to rest.' Let not the world tire your strength and exhaust your spirits, but keep them for the best things. Be not too folicitous to know what Gop is doing, or will do, in the world; but fee that your own work be well done, and that you are daily getting more ready for your end and change. Be patient and contented with your present condition; and be careful to avoid the detestable character which the Apostle Jude gives of some professing christians, whom he calls murmurers and complainers, or, as the word fignifies, perfons who find fault with the lot assigned them. To prevent this, reflect upon your prospects as christians, and 'hope and quietly wait for the falvation of the Lord.' In a word, ' the end of all things is at hand hand, be fober and watch vunto prayer. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts? for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh? This leads ime to radd, doidw or blrow lan

3. Let aged Saints comfort themselves with the prospect of this happiness, promised to Daniel; for it is the lot of all Gop's faithful servants.

Tho' Daniel was at a loss to understand his own prophecies; yet it was fulficient for him to know, that Gop intended for him a fafe and peaceful retreat; a glorious refurrection, and a happy portion in the eternal world. The new testament throws a light upon these promises, and gives us brighter and fuller discoveries than Daniel had; that we thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Your end is drawing nigh. Your daily Infirmities remind you that it is very near. When that comes, you will reft. God will hide you from all pains, and cares, and forrows in the grave, and conduct your separate spirits to your father's house. When foul and body are just parting, you may chearfully fay, as the pious Mr. Matthew Mead did in that circumstance,

'I am going home, as every honest man should, when his work is done: and I bless God, I have a good home to go to.' To an eye of faith, it matters little what your lot here is; where you live; what your condition is; how you are treated by the world; or where you die and are buried. You have a happy lot, on which you are just entering; purchased by the blood of Christ, and ensured by the promise of that God who cannot lie. Live then upon these encouragements; and when your afflictions and burdens increase, let this be your language; 'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup; he maintaineth my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleafant places, and I have a goodly heritage.' + Let the believing prospect of this affift you to bear the calamities of life with fortitude and chearfulness, and make you willing to go and possess your inheritance. Let your last days be spent in habitual thankfulness, for these consolations and hopes. Gratefully own your obligations to God and the Redeemer, for the difcoveries

coveries of the gospel, the operations of the spirit upon your hearts, and any good hope thro' grace which you enjoy. Thus live and die as penitent believers, at the foot of the cross; rejoicing in Christ Jefus, having no confidence in yourselves, and looking for the mercy of your adorable Redeemer, unto eternal life. So the pious and zealous Mr. John Know faid on his death bed, 'Satan hath been now feeking to perfuade me, that my fidelity and labours in the ministry have merited heaven. But bleffed be God, who brought to my mind those two scriptures, ' what hast thou that thou hast not received? and, 'not I, but the grace of God with me.' Another pious minister in the like circumstances, being told by a friend, that he was going to receive his reward, answered, 'Brother, I am going to receive mercy.'- Finally, pray earnestly, that God would by his fpirit, fpeak to your hearts those good and comfortable Words, which he spoke to aged Daniel: That he would witness with your spirits, that this is your lot, and give you fome delightful foretastes of the inheritance.

I conclude, with expressing my best wishes and prayers for you, in the words of the apostle, + ' Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope thro' the power of the Holy Ghoit'. Amen.

+ Rom. xv. 13.

THE END.





